

Land deal row: Revenue officials should have refused faulty registrations, says Ajit Pawar

NAGPUR: Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar on Saturday said officials responsible for registering documents should have refused to process agreements that were not permissible under the law and clearly informed the parties concerned about such limitations.

His comments come against the backdrop of a notice issued by the deputy registrar to the firm of his son, Parth Pawar, seeking Rs 21 crore in stamp duty and penalties in connection with a controversial land deal in Pune.

Hitting out at Pawar, Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Sanjay Raut said as the deputy CM wields so much of influence in the government, would any officer dare to question him.

"Does anyone have the courage in the revenue department (to defy) if Parth Pawar comes up with any proposal?" Raut asked.

Recently, the Bombay High Court raised sharp questions regarding the police probe into the land deal, suggesting authorities might be shielding Parth Pawar by failing to name him in the FIR.

Ajit Pawar sought to dispel perceptions stemming from a bill cleared by the legislative assembly on Friday, which empowers the revenue minister to hold hearings in contentious cases related to the Inspector General of Registration (IGR).

Pawar said those who registered such documents were at fault, and of-



ficials should have exercised due diligence at the time of registration.

"The officials who received the documents for registration of a deal should have refused to register it. They should have clearly informed the parties that such an agreement cannot be processed," the deputy chief minister told reporters in Nagpur.

When asked about allegations that

the bill was moved to protect Parth, who holds a 99 per cent equity stake in Amadea Enterprises LLP, Pawar reiterated that the responsibility lay with the registering authorities.

"We are elected representatives in the House, and people have voted for us. We are free to take decisions or make amendments we find suitable," he said when asked about the intent behind the

amendment.

Revenue Minister Chandrashekar Bawankule has said that under the earlier provision, complainants dissatisfied with decisions at the level of the IGR had to approach the high court. After the amendment, such complainants can now approach the revenue minister, who will be authorised to hold hearings in these matters.

UDF leaders see local body poll trends as pointer to 2026 Assembly elections in Kerala

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM: Buoyed by the strong performance of the Congress-led UDF in the local body polls, KPCC president Sunny Joseph said on Saturday that the front's results indicated the people had rejected the LDF government.

According to early trends, the UDF was leading in more grama panchayats, block panchayats, municipalities and corporations than the LDF.

The local body polls were held in two phases in the state earlier this week.

Speaking to reporters here, Joseph said the people of Kerala had extended their support to the UDF.

"We could expose the LDF government's anti-people stance and the people understood it. The LDF's fake propaganda was rejected by the people. The UDF is moving towards a historic victory," he said.

He said a united effort, proper preparations, good candidate selection and hard work had resulted in the Congress and the UDF's victory in the elections.

Asked about the prospects in the Thiruvananthapuram Corporation, Joseph said the party was studying the matter and would comment later.

LDF convenor T P Ramakrishnan said the results would be closely examined.

According to him, the government had done everything possible for the people.

"Why such a verdict happened will be examined at the micro level. People's opinion will be considered and further steps will be taken," he said. He added that decisions would be taken after analysing the results. "If any

corrective measures are required, we will initiate them and move forward," he said.

AICC leader K C Venugopal said the results showed that people had begun ousting those who, he alleged, were responsible for the loss of gold at Lord Ayyappa's temple.

"This trend will continue in the Assembly elections as well. It is an indication that the people are ready to bring down the LDF government," he said.

Venugopal said the UDF had registered victories even in CPI(M) and LDF strongholds.

"I congratulate all UDF workers for their hard work. Congress workers and leaders worked unitedly," he said.

Referring to remarks made by Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan against the Congress on polling day, Venugopal said the voters had responded through the verdict.

"I do not know whether the chief minister understands that the people are against him. Otherwise, he does not know the sentiment of the people. The state government cannot move an inch further," he said.

He said the results indicated a strong comeback for the UDF in Kerala. Asked whether the Sabarimala gold loss issue had affected the LDF in the local polls, Venugopal said the CM and the CPI(M) state secretary did not take the issue seriously.

"We took a strong stand on the matter. The BJP played a foul game in it," he alleged.

On the BJP's role in the local body elections, Venugopal alleged that the party operated with the CPI(M)'s tacit support.

Centre approves 513 new 4G mobile towers for Chhattisgarh under Digital Bharat Nidhi

RAIPUR: The Union government has approved installation of 513 new 4G mobile towers in Chhattisgarh under the Digital Bharat Nidhi fund, officials said on Saturday.

Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai welcomed the decision, and said this is a significant outcome of combined efforts to restore peace, security and development in the Naxal-affected and remote regions of the state.

The decision is a strong link in the ongoing effective efforts towards Maoist elimination. The areas where stability has been established through the sustained action by security forces and administrative coordination, are now witnessing focused development and expansion of digital connectivity, he said in a statement. The CM said

the new 4G towers which will be installed through BSNL, will provide accessible and reliable mobile and internet services to people living in far-flung and inaccessible areas for the first time. "This will strengthen access to education, healthcare, employment, administrative services and emergency communication," he said. Sai said the expansion of digital connectivity will also prove to be a milestone for financial inclusion, as improved mobile networks will facilitate seamless access to banking services, direct benefit transfer (DBT), UPI, insurance, pension and other digital platforms for citizens.

The initiative aligns with the core objective of the 'Digital India' programme to ensure last-mile delivery of development, he said, adding

that enhanced connectivity will create new digital opportunities for local youth and give a boost to the regional economy. The Centre, under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, is prioritising development along with security in Naxal-affected states, and the Chhattisgarh government is committed to working closely with the Centre to bring every citizen into the mainstream of development, he added.

Sai expressed gratitude on behalf of the people of Chhattisgarh to PM Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah and Union Minister of Communications Jyotiraditya Scindia, describing the decision as a historic step towards making the state digitally empowered, secure and inclusive.

Mandir-Masjid: How competitive faith politics recasting Bengal's 2026 poll battle

KOLKATA: As West Bengal heads into an election year, a spate of temple-mosque announcements, scripture spectacles and date-sensitive symbolism is pushing the state's politics into unfamiliar territory, sharpening communal polarisation in a borderland shaped by partition memories, demographic anxieties, and a coexistence periodically tested by political mobilisation.

From bordering Murshidabad district to the planned township of Salt Lake, on the eastern fringes of Kolkata, faith has emerged as the most audible idiom of political mobilisation, often drowning out conversations on migration, jobs, prices and governance,

as rival players test how far religious assertion can stretch Bengal's electoral grammar ahead of the assembly polls.

The immediate spark came on December 6, which marks the anniversary of the Babri Masjid demolition.

Suspended TMC MLA Humayun Kabir pressed ahead with laying the foundation stone of a mosque "modelled on the original Babri structure" in Murshidabad's Rejinagar, under unprecedented security cover.

Kabir argued that the political moment itself had shifted.

"People are trying to pretend that faith has no place in Bengal's politics. That phase is over. Whether one likes it

or not, questions of identity, dignity and religious rights will shape the next election. The next elections will be fought on questions of honour and belonging. Anyone denying that is not reading the ground," Kabir told PTI.

In nearby Banjatiya in Murshidabad, BJP leaders also conducted groundwork rituals for a Ram temple, framing it as resistance to what they called minority appeasement. Elsewhere, the saffron party sharpened its pitch around cultural assertion, while the TMC moved quickly to distance itself from Kabir's actions.

"Bengal's culture has never supported competitive religious politics. The par-

ty believes faith is personal and politics must remain inclusive. We will not allow Bengal to be converted into a laboratory for polarisation experiments borrowed from elsewhere," TMC spokesperson Kunal Ghosh said.

The response underlined the party's political tightrope - managing a minority base that accounts for nearly 30 per cent of the electorate, while arresting signs of Hindu drift amid intensifying identity politics.

On December 7, Kolkata's Brigade Parade Grounds, the most politically loaded public stage, hosted a massive Bhagavad Gita recital projected as "five lakh voices chanting together".

Retired IAF personnel arrested for alleged Pak links in Assam

TEZPUR: A retired Indian Air Force personnel has been arrested in Assam's Sonitpur district for alleged links with Pakistani intelligence operatives, police said on Saturday.

Additional Superintendent of Police Haricharan Bhumij said preliminary investigation revealed that the accused had shared sensitive documents and information with Pakistani operatives over social media.

Police have seized his laptop and mobile phone.

The devices have been sent for forensic examination, though some data has been deleted, Bhumij said.

The officer said a case has been registered under the relevant sections of the BNS.

GRAP Stage III curbs invoked in Delhi-NCR amid sharp dip in air quality

NEW DELHI: The Commission for Air Quality Management on Saturday invoked stricter GRAP Stage-III restrictions, including shifting schools to hybrid mode up to Class 5 and restrictions on construction and demolition work, in Delhi-NCR after pollution levels rose sharply amid unfavourable meteorological conditions.

The national capital's 24-hour average air quality index (AQI) stood at 349 but jumped to 401 by 10 am on Saturday, "owing to slow wind speed, stable atmosphere, unfavourable weather parameters and meteorological conditions and lack of dispersal of pollutants", the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) said in a statement.

It said that due to the prevailing trend of air quality, and to further prevent deterioration in the region, the CAQM GRAP Sub-Committee on Saturday took the call to invoke all actions under Stage-III of the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) 'Severe' Air Quality with immediate effect in the NCR.

This is in addition to the actions under Stages I and II of GRAP already in force in NCR, the statement added.

Stage III restrictions include a ban on non-essential construction, demolition work, stone crushing and mining activities. BS III petrol and BS IV diesel four-wheelers are also restricted in Delhi, Gurugram, Faridabad, Ghaziabad and Gautam Buddh Nagar.

It also entails a ban on older diesel goods vehicles in Delhi, while schools up to Class 5 shift to hybrid mode and offices may operate with 50 per cent staff in Delhi-NCR.

During winters, the Delhi-NCR region enforces restrictions under GRAP, which categorises air quality into four stages - Stage I (Poor, AQI 201-300), Stage II (Very Poor, AQI 301-400), Stage III (Severe, AQI 401-450), and Stage IV (Severe Plus, AQI above 450).

Unfavourable meteorological conditions, combined with vehicle emissions, paddy-straw burning, firecrackers and other local pollution sources, lead to hazardous air quality levels in Delhi-NCR during winters.

Need to be taught lesson: SC refuses to entertain bail plea of Mumbai BMW hit-and-run case accused

NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court has refused to entertain the bail plea of Mihir Shah, the son of a former Shiv Sena leader, in the 2024 Mumbai BMW hit-and-run case, saying "these boys need to be taught a lesson".

A bench of Justices Dipankar Datta and A G Masih took into account that the accused belonged to an affluent family and his father was associated with the Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde-led faction of the Shiv Sena.

"He parks his Mercedes in the shed, takes out his BMW and crashes it and goes absconding. Let him be inside for some time. These boys need to be taught a lesson," the bench observed on Friday while refusing to entertain the bail plea.

Senior advocate Rebecca John, appearing for Shah, said the high court allowed him to seek bail after the testimony of key witnesses was recorded in the case. However, sensing the mood of the court, she sought permission to withdraw the plea, which was allowed. Shah (24) was arrested on July 9 last year, two days after he allegedly rammed



his BMW car into a two-wheeler in Mumbai's Worli area, killing Kaveri Nakhwa (45) and leaving her husband, Pradeep Nakhwa, injured. The accused allegedly sped off towards the Bandra-Worli Sea Link after the accident, even as the woman remained on the bonnet of the car and then got entangled in its wheels for a distance of more than 1.5 kilometres. Shah's driver, Rajrishi Bidawat,

who was also present in the car at the time of the accident, was arrested on the day of the alleged accident. Both are in judicial custody. Shah has challenged the November 21 order of the Bombay High Court that denied him bail in the case after noting that he was heavily inebriated and failed to stop the car even after hitting a scooter and dragging the victim under his vehicle.

1 arrested in 'road accident' in which prime witness against TMC strongman Sheikh Shajahan was injured

KOLKATA: One person was arrested on Saturday in connection with the alleged road accident, in which one of the prime witnesses in the CBI and ED cases against suspended TMC leader Sheikh Shajahan of Sandeshkhali was injured and his son killed, police said.

The arrest was made in the early hours from Sarberia in Baruipur sub-division of South 24 Parganas district, they said.

"Evidence showed his involvement in the road accident. We have arrested him and will question him. He will be produced in the court this afternoon," a police officer said.

Bholanath Ghosh, the witness, was injured, and his younger son Satyajit (32) and driver Sahanur Molla (27) were killed as

a truck collided with their car on the Basanti Highway near Boyramari petrol pump in the Nazat police station area on Wednesday.

After striking the car, the 16-wheel truck dragged the vehicle and dumped it into a roadside waterbody, police said.

Shajahan, accused of sexual abuse and land grab, was arrested in February 2024 after being on the run for 55 days. He was the TMC convenor of Sandeshkhali assembly constituency and a member of the North 24 Parganas zilla parishad.

He was initially arrested in two cases lodged at the Nazat police station in connection with an assault on Enforcement Directorate (ED) officers during a raid at his house in a ration scam case.

India's future combat power would be driven by Jointnesss, Atmanirbharta, Innovation: Gen Chauhan

HYDERABAD: General Anil Chauhan on Saturday said the country's future combat power would be driven by the three pillars -- Jointnesss, Atmanirbharta and Innovation, what the CDS described as JAI.

General Chauhan, who reviewed the Combined Graduation Parade (CGP) at the Air Force Academy at Dundigal near here, without referring to any country, said developments that indicate institutional fragility and reactive adjustments are often seen around us.

"Wars cannot (be) won by rhetoric, but by purposeful action. Around us, we often witness developments that signal institutional fragility and reactive adjustments.

In contrast, India's strength rests on the robust institutions, democratic stability and un-

wavering professionalism of our armed forces," he said.

The Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) told the newly commissioned officers that they are entering the Indian Air Force during a phase of deep transformation of the armed forces.

Integrated structures, joint operations and national pursuit of 'Atmanirbharta' (self reliance) in defence are shaping the future of India's military strength, he said.

The journey ahead of the newly commissioned officers will be guided by JAI, the first word of Jai Hind, he said.

Jointnesss signifies fighting as one nation and one force and Atmanirbharta indicate trusted platforms and systems made not just for India but for the world. Innovation signifies daring to think ahead and to be ahead of

the curve, he said.

"These three pillars will shape India's future of combat power," he said.

The intensity of operations may have ebbed, but Operation Sindoor continues, he said.

"You (new officers) also join the Air Force at a moment when a new normal has firmly taken shape. An era defined by a high degree of operational preparedness, 24-7, 365 days. The intensity of operations may have ebbed, but Operation Sindhur continues," he said.

Asserting that war and warfare are at the cusp of a major revolution, General Chauhan said the Defence forces are committed to adapt to changing environment and imbuing reforms to remain ready and relevant.

He further said battles in the older domains will always re-

main contested, often brutal. But in the new domains, they will be smart, swift, and shaped by intellect, innovation, and initiative. The force that masters new frontiers is more likely to prevail in future conflicts.

General Chauhan reviewed the Combined Graduation Parade of 216 Course.

The event marks the successful completion of the pre-commissioning training of flight cadets across various branches of the Indian Air Force (IAF).

The event also included a display by the Akash Ganga team and Air Warrior Drill Team (AWDT) to mark the beginning of the CGP.

Aerial displays by the Sarang helicopter display team and the Suryakiran Aerobatic Team (SKAT) were major attractions of the ceremony.

Congress Trying to Turn the Lie of “Vote Theft” into Truth: MP Basavaraj Bommai



Haveri: Former Chief Minister and Member of Parliament Basavaraj Bommai said that the Congress party is attempting to turn a lie into truth in the name of “vote theft,” but asserted that such efforts would not succeed. Speaking to the media in Haveri, he said that even many Congress leaders do not believe in the so-called campaign to project vote theft as truth. Several leaders are participating only for the sake of prestige. The Congress believes that by repeating a lie a thousand times, it can be made to appear as truth. But nothing will come of it. Recalling past experience, Bommai said the Congress fought elections in Bihar raising the same issue and ended up winning the fewest seats. “If they have still not learnt a lesson from that, then nothing more can be done,” he remarked.

Truth Will Emerge

Responding to a question on the filing of a charge sheet against former BJP MLA from Aland, Subhash Guttadar, Bommai said that merely

filing a charge sheet does not prove anything. “It has to be established in a court of law. Under what circumstances was the SIT formed? How did the SIT conduct the investigation? The Election Commission has already given a clear explanation,” he said. Bommai pointed out that although there was a request to delete around 6,000 votes, only 18 votes were actually deleted. “Therefore, the truth will come out in court. The role of the Election Commission and the factual position will all be revealed,” he added.

No Moral Policing

Reacting to a question on the assault on a teacher in Savanur, Bommai said he does not accept moral policing under any circumstances and that those who commit mistakes must be punished according to law. “Instead of that, parading a person on the streets and tearing his clothes is completely wrong. Such inhuman acts should not be allowed,” he said. He said parading a teacher with a garland of footwear amounted to taking the law into one’s own hands. “If he has committed an offence, he should be punished through due process. But taking him around the streets even before that is barbaric. There is no place for this in a democracy,” Bommai asserted.

He alleged that police inaction had led to such incidents. “Because of their negligence, all this has happened. Even after several rape cases, the real culprits have not been arrested. When those who violate the law are encouraged, such incidents take place. Otherwise, this could have been prevented,” he said, accusing the government of appeasement politics.

Free Medical Camp for Transgender Persons and Marginalized Women



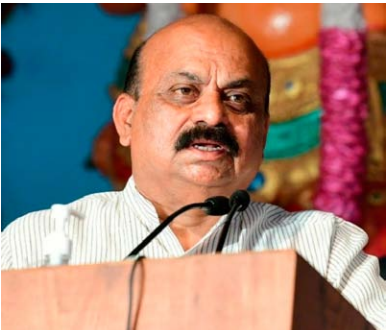
Bangalore : Vikas India Network (VIN), a non-governmental organization based in Bangalore, in collaboration with CSI Hospital, Ashraya Bangalore Central Church and the Redemptorist Fathers (CSSR), successfully organized a Free Medical Camp for transgender persons and marginalized women in at Nava Spoorthi Kendra, Cookson Road, Bangalore.

The Medical Camp was inaugurated with the Lighting of the Lamp in the presence of representatives from the CSI Hospital and the Redemptorists. The Camp witnessed an active participation by a considerable number of people from the transgender community and marginalized women. The beneficiaries of the camp were provided with Ration Kits, Blankets and Lunch Packets as part of the programme. The Medical Camp was meticulously planned and executed by Fr. A. S. Raja, C.Ss.R, Sr. Laveena, Sr. Jyothi, with the help of Mrs Jayasree ,Dr. C. R. Femine Medical Superintendent, Mr. Louis Rao, Administrator, and the efficient medical team from the CSI Hospital, Bangalore. Vikas India Network along with its partners expressed its gratitude to the special contributors of the Medical Camp, namely, the entire Medical Team from the CSI Hospital, representatives from the Ashraya Bangalore Central Church, Refemtortist Fathers and Mr. Antony George, the proprietor of Ammas Pastries.

Hukkeri Math Jatra Mahotsava from December 25 to 30 to be a Historic Event: MP Basavaraj Bommai

Haveri: Former Chief Minister and Member of Parliament Basavaraj Bommai said that the Jatra Mahotsava of Hukkeri Math, scheduled to be held from December 25 to 30, will be a historic event, marked by large participation and significant social and spiritual initiatives. He said the seer of Hukkeri Math is leading a meaningful social purification movement aimed at reforming society, especially the youth.

Addressing a press conference organised in connection with the Hukkeri Math Jatra Mahotsava in Haveri on Sunday , he said Union Ministers Pralhad Joshi and V. Somanna, along with Mysuru royal scion and Member of Parliament Yaduveer Krishnadatta Chamaraja Wadiyar, will take part in the programme, underlining its importance at the state and national level.



The former CM said that all educational institutions and schools run under the patronage of Hukkeri Math are celebrating their golden jubilee. For the past five decades, these institutions have been imparting education to children from all communities without any caste discrimination. The golden jubilee celebrations reflect the success of the long spiritual and

social effort undertaken to create a cultured, disciplined and educated society in this region. As part of the celebrations, several programmes have been planned, including the inauguration of a students’ hostel, devotional Guru Vandané, and the Tulabhara of the revered pontiff. These programmes, he said, have been organised to provide devotees an opportunity to express their devotion with deep faith and reverence.The MP noted that the seer of Hukkeri Math possesses a dignified and spiritually accomplished personality. Over the past month, the Math has been organising continuous programmes to promote religious awareness, instil values among the youth, eliminate bad habits and negative tendencies, and guide people towards a pure and disciplined way of life.

Mass cleanliness drive – removal of a total of 1,350 tonnes of waste

Bengaluru : With the objective of keeping the city clean, the Bengaluru North City Corporation conducted a mass cleanliness drive on December 14, 2025, from 7:00 AM to 4:00 PM across its jurisdiction. The mass cleanliness drive was carried out under the leadership of the Commissioner of Bengaluru North City Corporation, Shri Pommala Sunil Kumar. The Revenue Minister, Krishna Byre Gowda, visited the site, reviewed the cleanliness drive, and issued necessary instructions.The cleanliness drive was carried out from Nagawara Junction to Hebbal Junction (Outer Ring Road) and further up to Allalasandra Bridge.

Several agencies and stakeholders participated in the drive, including BMRCL, NHAI, B-SMILE, BWSSB, BESCOM, nearby commercial establishments and entrepreneurs, and local organizations.During the operation, tractors, JCBs, and other machinery were deployed, and poura-karmikas were engaged to remove debris, waste accumulated along both sides of the roads, discarded household items, and construction debris. Additionally, during the drive, around 40 shop structures that had illegally encroached upon the footpath in front of the Mahindra showroom were removed, restoring smooth pedestrian movement.

Canarys Automation Sets Benchmark in IT Sector by Celebrating 70th Kannada Rajyotsava with Employees



Bengaluru: While it is often believed that software companies show limited interest in celebrating Kannada Rajyotsava, Canarys Automation has emerged as a pioneer in keeping Karnataka’s cultural and linguistic heritage alive within the IT sector. The company celebrated Kannada Rajyotsava with great enthusiasm at Satya Sai Sanskruth Sadanam on Koramangala, with hundreds of employees and their family members participating. The uniqueness of the celebration lay in the fact that it was conducted by the employees, for the employees, and of the employees, without involving any external performers. Canarys Automation has been celebrating Kannada Rajyotsava continuously for the last 17 years, making it one of the few IT companies to uphold this tradition consistently. Speaking on the occasion, Chief Executive Officer Sheshadri Srinivas said that the company actively encourages non-Kannada-speaking employees to learn Kannada. “Around 20 to 30 percent of our workforce comes from other states. We conduct Kannada classes for them and issue certificates upon completion, enabling them to converse confidently in Kannada without hesitation,” he said. The company also recognizes employee loyalty by awarding gold medals — one gold medal for completing five years, two for ten years, and more for longer service. This gesture, according to the management, symbolizes appreciation for dedication and long-term association with the organization.

It’s a fight to protect voting rights of 140 crore Indians: DCM DK Shivakumar

New Delhi : Dismissing any political motive behind the rally against vote theft, Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar said that it was a fight to protect the voting rights of 140 crore Indians.

Speaking to reporters at Karnataka Bhawan in New Delhi, he said, “We started the rally at Freedom Park in Bengaluru under the leadership of Rahul Gandhi and Mallikarjun Kharge. That fight has now reached Ramila Maidan. We are sending a message of free and fair elections in the country. Rahul Gandhi has given several examples of vote theft and unfair elections. Yet, the Election Commission is not doing anything. This is a fight to create awareness among the people about misuse of Constitutional bodies.”

4000 party workers attending the rally

There are 3500 to 4000 party workers from Karnataka attending today’s rally. We have arranged for accommodation for about 1500 party workers while the rest have made their own arrangements. We have collected 1.27 crore signatures



from Karnataka in the campaign against vote theft. Everyone here has come to protect the voting rights of people,” he said.

“The BJP government is blocking vehicles from entering Delhi. I don’t know why they are worried about the rally. No one can muffle our voice,” he added.

about visiting the Congress party office, he said, “I have been asked to go to the party office from where we will leave for Ramila Maidan by bus. We have given our party workers T shirts suitable for cold weather.”

Congress will not think of win or loss

Asked about Home Minister Amit Shah’s statement that Congress is conducting this rally out of desperation, he said, “The Congress party doesn’t think of win or loss. There are a lot of people from the party who have even sacrificed their lives for independence. Sonia Gandhi sacrificed her power. Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi sacrificed their lives for the country. Jawaharalal and Gandhiji sacrificed their freedom and went for jail for the nation.”

Sri Sri Sri Nanjavadhuta Mahaswamiji Inaugurates Second ‘Smart Quick – Nio Fresh’ Super market in Yelahanka

Bengaluru : The second branch of Smart Quick – Nio Fresh, a customer-friendly smart retail store offering quality groceries, fresh fruits, vegetables and daily essentials under one roof, was inaugurated in Yelahanka, Bengaluru. The store was formally inaugurated by Sri Sri Sri Nanjavadhuta Mahaswamiji of Spatikapuri Mahasamsthan, who blessed the new venture.

The inauguration ceremony was attended by Deepu Gowda, Founder of Smart Quick, along with company leaders Shivu M. Gowda, Sudeep Gowda and Udaya Shetty, and other dignitaries.

Addressing the gathering, Sri Sri Sri Nanjavadhuta Mahaswamiji appreciated the Nio Fresh initiative, stating that the project was envisioned with the noble aim of improving the lives of farmers and workers engaged in cottage industries and bringing economic stability to them. He emphasized that providing employment opportunities to rural youth through Nio Fresh outlets and guiding them towards a self-reliant life is a socially meaningful initiative. Supplying customers with high-quality products at affordable prices, he said, is equivalent to serving society and God. Speaking on the occasion, Founder Deepu Gowda said that Smart Quick is continuously striving



to contribute towards the vision of a self-reliant India. He explained that daily essentials are sourced directly from manufacturers and producers and supplied to consumers, ensuring better quality at reasonable prices, which greatly benefits customers.

With the opening of its second outlet in Yelahanka, Nio Fresh plans to expand further across

Bengaluru city and other locations in the near future. To mark the inauguration, special offers and attractive discounts are being provided to customers visiting the store. The newly opened Nio Fresh outlet aims to redefine everyday shopping by combining quality, affordability and social responsibility, making it a preferred destination for households in the area.

Quantum Physics & Ecology to be Taught in 41 New ‘Nehru STREAM Labs’ in Kalyana Karnataka, Announces Minister N.S. Boseraju

BENGALURU : In a groundbreaking initiative to redefine school education in the state, Minister for Minor Irrigation, Science, and Technology, N.S. Boseraju, today announced the establishment of 41 ‘Nehru STREAM Labs’ across the Kalyana Karnataka region.Collaborating with the Kalyana Karnataka Region Development Board (KKRDB), the project moves beyond traditional STEM learning by introducing a unique curriculum that blends high-end futuristic science with environmental sustainability.Minister N.S. Boseraju highlighted that the definition of STREAM has been curated to address both global scientific advancements and local environmental needs.“We are setting a new benchmark for government schools. Under this initiative, STREAM will stand for Science, Technology, Robotics, Ecology, Astronomy, and Mathematics,” said Minister Boseraju. He further added, “For the first time, we are introducing basic exposure to Quantum Physics at the school level to spark curiosity about the fundamental nature of the universe. Simultaneously, we are placing a massive stress on Ecology. This will be a first-of-its-kind initiative where students get practical exposure to local flora, fauna, and their immediate environment. Our goal is to instill a deep sense of sustainability and environmental stewardship within young minds from an early age.”Dr. Ajay Dharam Singh, Chairman of KKRDB and MLA for Jevargi, stated that the project is designed to catch them young. “To build a future-ready generation, we must introduce them to these concepts early.

New Tax Policy Implemented for Public Benefit; Focus on Technology and Transparency: Supreme Court Justice Ujjal Bhuyan

- ALL INDIA FEDERATION OF TAX PRACTITIONERS (AIFTP) NATIONAL CONVENTION HELD — CA S. VENKATARAMANI TAKES CHARGE AS NATIONAL PRESIDENT

Bengaluru : Supreme Court Justice Ujjal Bhuyan stated that the introduction of the new tax laws, which incorporate technology-based schemes to ensure transparency and efficiency, will prove highly beneficial to the common man.

He was speaking after inaugurating the 28th National Convention organized jointly by the All India Federation of Tax Practitioners (AIFTP), the Karnataka State Chartered Accountants Association (KSCAA), and the Bengaluru Branch of SIRC of ICAI at the Palace Grounds today.

Justice Bhuyan highlighted the historic transition in the tax regime, noting that the Income Tax Act of 1961 has been repealed after six decades to be replaced by the Income Tax Act, 2025. “This



new Act will come into effect from next April. Significant emphasis is being placed on simplifying compliance and driving digital transformation,” he said.

Focus on Reducing Bias and Simplifying Forms “Priority is being given to reducing human bias in the system.

Technology-driven initiatives are being introduced to foster transparency and efficiency,” Justice Bhuyan explained.He further detailed that compre-

hensive definitions have been provided for Virtual Digital Assets and the digital space under the new framework. Additionally, ITR forms and quarterly TDS forms have been redesigned to be simpler and more easily understandable for the general public.He also commended tax practitioners and auditors for their dual role in facilitating tax payments and aiding in the detection of tax evasion. Speaking on the occasion, High Court Chief Justice Vibhu Bakhru remarked that transparent and strict tax collection is essential for further improving the country’s economic condition. “The responsibility of strengthening our nation’s economy for the 2047 vision lies with everyone. The spirit of this is

our country’ must be embraced by all,” he asserted. New President Takes Charge During the event, CA S. Venkataramani assumed office as the National President of the All India Federation of Tax Practitioners.Addressing the gathering, CA Venkataramani said, “I am grateful for the trust you have placed in me by electing me as President, and I promise to uphold it. Having held various positions in this field, I look forward to fostering knowledge sharing and cooperation.” Dignitaries Present The event was attended by AIFTP Immediate Past President Samir S Jani, KSCAA President C.A Shivaprakash Viraktamath, Bengaluru Branch Chairman CA Manjunath, Convention.

EDITORIAL

A Democracy Fretting to be a Dictatorship

There is this difference between Donald Trump and Narendra Modi: during his electioneering for the United States’ presidency, Trump had forthrightly declared, “I will be a dictator from day one.” Endowed with Asiatic genius, Narendra Modi continues to make flashy avowals of his alleged commitment to constitutional rule. However, his everyday governance suggests a penchant for reducing the separation of powers – the “basic structure” – to a formal construct, vestigial on the ground. The new home minister in Bihar, Samrat Chaudhary from the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has not lost a minute in importing the cruel and illegal bulldozer raj from Uttar Pradesh to Bihar’s cannily selected areas, besides some in Patna, Darbhanga, Begusarai, Muzaffarpur and Chhapra, all of which are in the grip of bulldozer atrocities as we speak. The predominant social and economic profile of these districts tells its own tale. That this shift in the style of enforcing executive will in Bihar could not be effected without sanction from the Union government may be safely assumed. Thus, the ex-Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, Shri Gavai, who counted his castigation of bulldozer raj as one of the high points of his tenure, may well be wondering whether his exertions have left any lasting residue on the state of law and order in the country. Alas, those resisting the mechanised coercion in Bihar now, including droves of affected women, can be heard to rue casting their vote for the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) in the just-concluded state assembly election – yet another instance of how the populace may first be inveigled and then left holding the sack. It had best be recognised how Shri Modi, with support from a plethora of right-wing organisations, has achieved this capacity to draw allegiance and dump the promise. Over his tenure as chief executive, it has been his signal achievement to transform citizens into devotees – a consequence brought about by providing overt and covert state patronage to religious festivals and unending yatras throughout any calendar year. Although the devotion is ostensibly directed at gods and goddesses, this state-supported cult of devotion could not but transfer to Shri Modi himself. He stands almost as an oracle, whose nod comes to signify good governance and the rule of law. We may recall how the chairman of the Drafting Committee of the Indian Constitution Dr B.R. Ambedkar had cautioned the republic that “bhakti” (devotion) in politics is a sure road to dictatorship. It has been a uniquely impressive sleight of hand to convert unceasing immersion in denominational devotion, especially in the Hindi belt, into political devotion without often asking for it. Phrases like “Modi ki guarantee”, deployed periodically, have gone a long way in securing the conflation of religious devotion and political allegiance. In this way, avatars have come to be fused without the constitution noticing the wonder. And then, the Sanchar Saathi app. The Modi government issued secret directions to manufacturers of smartphones to mandatorily “pre-install” the government-sponsored Sanchar Sathi app on all phones at the point of manufacture, and in all existing phones by upgrading their software. The app was not amenable to “restriction” or “disabling”, i.e., the consumer would have no control over its existence and had to remain subject to its behaviour. The Indian Express (December 3), is to be lauded for having quickly caught on and demanding, editorially, that the government “rescind” the new direction “before it goes to court”.

Editorial

After 11.5 Years of Officially Trying to Redefine Indian Culture, We Have FA9LA

The government of India has set in place now very overt moves to drastically enhance the ‘Indic’ – which is India, minus anything that spells its Muslim people and heritage. There are no elected Muslim representatives in the ruling party or ministers in government, school and college textbooks stand purged, there is an attack on Urdu/Persian words in courts and police stations, and vicious demonisation when it comes to films like Chhaava, Article 370, The Kashmir Files and The Kerala Story. After nearly eleven and a half years of a concerted plan to render India a monolith, how is our cultural fabric doing? Unlike AQL, it is hard to have a government-verified measure of the state of its wear and tear. But what does anecdotal evidence, based on some events in December, say about what is ‘Indian’ these days? The recent Hindi film Dhurandhar, which has supposedly worked at the box office in the first few days, is the latest to build a narrative of a ‘new India’ where to be Indian is being Hindu, and all others are either murderous killers or just contemptible. Pakistan is a useful proxy stand-in for ‘the other culture’. Yet the film’s own success exposes this contradiction. Dhurandhar, in large part, has made it thanks to the power of its soundtrack, the song FA9LA, going viral. The character played by Akshaya Khanna, Rehman Dakait, enters the set to this Bahraini rap track, sung by Bahraini-Moroccan rap artist Flipperachi aka Hussam Aseem. FA9LA was already a big hit in West Asia since 2024, and has now been adapted by music composer Shashwat Sachdev for Dhurandhar. This raging hit apart, the entire soundtrack of the film is, for the want of a better word, just India – and not ‘Indic’. It synthesises not just Arabic rap, but mixes together some retro hits, qawwali, Punjabi rap, and strains of pop. The titles of the tracks are also using words which would otherwise be deemed not ‘Indic’ enough for purified ‘Indic’ conversations in 2025. The tracks are called Ishq Jalakar, Gehra Hua, Shararat, Hawa Hawa, and Ez-Ez. What is the whole vibe of this soundtrack? Fully transgres-



sive of borders. The need to introduce cultural markers that would be popular and make the film a hit, has ensured that the mixed, the syncretic and not just a one-culture motif colour the canvas. This tilting at a specific culture, which is otherwise shown as seriously evil, is diabolical – and it sits uneasily with the film’s poison-laced narrative. Dhruandhar is to social ties what Animal was to gender ties, point out critics. The hate is not just on the screens but off-screen too. Film critics who dared point out to the elephant in the room have been hounded. Former MPs, those associated with the production, and prominent critics, have poured vitriol against critics and commentators who called out the film for its intentions and storyline. Jashn-e-Rekhta (Rekhta, meaning “mixed”), the Urdu festival organised since 2015 on an industrial scale) was the biggest open-air event in the capital between December 5 and 7. Approximately 120,000 people came and inhaled Delhi’s noxious air to be a part of the live vibe. Audiences were visibly transfixed by the sounds and draw they felt towards Urdu. Jashn-e-Rekhta gets panned in some circles for not being political enough or focussing on just the foods, lyricism and ‘beauty’ surrounding a great Indian language,

currently in an existential crisis. But we have come to a point when howsoever unintended, even signalling surviving and thriving is a political act. Scholar and public intellectual Alok Rai – also Premchand’s grandson – was in the capital speaking on Urdu’s future. He spoke on how despite mounting government pressure to keep Urdu out of the room, it is unable to make it go away. Its popularity, in his view, stems from two important places; first, it having developed from an engagement with several languages and territories in India, and being spoken in India over centuries, meant the sounds and tones have been sandpapered and polished, rendered almost mellifluous to the human ear. Second, Bombay Hindi cinema music serves as the basic emotional landscape of those parts of India familiar with Hindi. That sensibility has almost intravenously fed Hindustani and Urdu into our psyche. History suggests such purification drives backfire. Could we be seeing a replay of how misplaced ideas of India’s first I&B minister B.V. Keskar for a ‘pure’ All India Radio (AIR), banning them from playing impure Hindi film songs (in Hindustani) served as rocket-fuel for the popularity of both Hindi film music and the derided

harmonium? It eventually forced AIR to acquiesce and start a station, Vividh Bharti, that would play Hindi film music. This is a point very effectively made by Isabel Huacuja Alonso in Radio for the Millions, Hindi-Urdu Broadcasting Across Borders. At Alok Rai’s public lecture on Sunday, former Culture Secretary Ashok Vajpayee recounted that in Ujjain during Mahakal this year, he was visiting after it was no longer Shahi Sawari, but Rajsi Sawari, as de-Urdufication was on. He addressed the locals in a gathering and told them he was very puzzled, “bhai, sawari bhi to Urdu hai (even sawari is an Urdu word)”. A drive towards ‘One-Culture’, being about only ‘one’ imagined, Brahminical Hindutva-laden variety, is unable to really get around the multiple strands of what makes the Indian weave. Arabic rap, qawwali beats, the dots, dashes and accents that make for a happy “mixed” and mixed-up confluence remain the top notes of all that is Indian. The irony is complete. A film trafficking in hatred succeeds only by embracing the very syncretism it seeks to demonise. India’s plural sounds refuse to be silenced, even when amplified through speakers meant to broadcast their erasure.

SAAKHI: WHY I DARE TO TALK OF MULTICULTURALISM

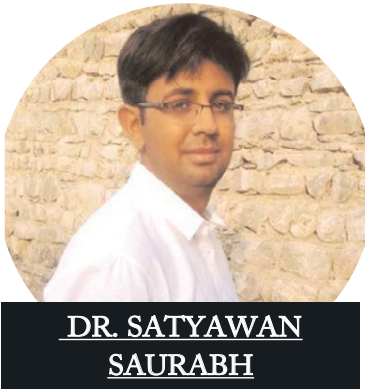
In the age that demands uniformity of thought, ideology, laws and language, let me indulge in some time travel to justify healthy hybridisation and multiculturalism. As a child growing up in a small town in north India, my sister and I were serial migrants, frequently uprooted from homes and government-run Hindi medium schools, mostly in mid term. After furnishing provisional school leaving papers we began attending classes in the new school, but realised that new schools used new textbooks. So, our books for the most part were dog-eared second hand ones, all that was available to children who landed smack in the middle of the term. On certain occasions, if we found pages or some chapters were missing, mother asked us to copy them from our class mates’ texts which they lent us with some derision. But I do not recall if we were ever greatly disadvantaged by such swaps. The texts followed a pattern that was neat and easily assimilable. Despite the great upheavals that the late 50s India faced, Indians were adapting fast to democratic freedoms and the education patters were mercifully not doctored by politicians to fit an ideology. Our parents were secure in their rare educational qualifications and natural adaptability of hill folks born to migrant ancestors. The Chinese aggression in early 60s had brought a great deal of focus to the neglected hilly areas bordering enemy territory. Roads began to be built, along with bridges and schools in rural areas. Our father, a committed educationist and a Gandhian, was asked to be posted to the hills to create chains of schools in the remotest areas for children of the largely poor families. Yes, Nainital and Mussorie and Dehradun had private boarding schools run on the British pattern but only the rich could afford their high fee. Government schools were built on large tracts of land with play-



fields and well-run hostels for girls. They were also inexpensive but it needed an act of faith for parents like ours to send their children there. I recall my schools in Almora, Mukteshwar and Nainital as merry salad bowls of cultures and languages. We had local students mostly from lower middle classes: clerks, school teachers, small shopkeepers. Some tribal girls came from the Bhot region bordering Tibet. Then there were the Terai girls mostly Jatt Sikhnis .They were from prosperous families of Punjabi refugees who were settled in Terai by the government and had rebuilt lives from scratch in the inhospitable area full of mosquitos and wild life. Nehru ji visited our school once and being chosen to hand him a bouquet of wild roses from our garden felt great. Nehru told us we were the future – whatever it was – and we believed him. The team of middle level educationists the state department of education threw up had by then really performed educational miracles. A few years later though, our two younger siblings were marched off to English medium schools. Government schools were teaching Hindi, but better jobs and bet-

ter husbands were available by then mostly to those who were taught in English medium private schools. One did feel betrayed, but realised that adults can tell lies. My mother’s schooling in a multicultural Shantiniketan had given her access to many languages. Interacting with my convent-going counterparts further proved to me that after becoming financially and linguistically homogenous, families did not necessarily become happier or sire more intelligent children. Being upper-caste and upper-class mattered more than adults realised and/or let on. In school, while my siblings read mostly European history, we learnt about how many ancient Indian kings and emperors and high priests had come in from other parts. In the history and Sanskrit texts we studied in the university, we picked up instances of injustices done to those on the lower rungs of society still continuing around us. Hindi newspapers and fiction in university reading rooms reported how what were minor doctrinal differences in the early years, were a decade morphing into all encompassing arguments over caste, communal and regional identities.

DISABILITY WITHIN PRISON WALLS: DIGNITY, RIGHTS AND STATE RESPONSIBILITY



In any democratic society, the prison system is not merely a symbol of crime and punishment, but also a testament to the state’s sensitivity, humane vision, and constitutional commitment. The Indian Constitution recognizes the dignity of the individual as a supreme value, and this dignity does not end upon becoming a criminal or a prisoner. Against this backdrop, the Supreme Court’s recent directives, which emphasize support for prisoners with disabilities in prisons, audits of facilities, and effective implementation of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016, expose a serious but long-neglected reality of the Indian prison system. These directives highlight the fact that persons with disabilities in prison are not only deprived of liberty but often deprived of their basic human rights. Indian prisons have historically been based on “normal” physical and mental standards, with disability viewed as an exception or an administrative inconvenience. As a result, the needs of prisoners with physical, sensory, intellectual, or psychosocial disabilities have not found adequate accommodation within prison governance structures. The lack of identification and registration of disability at admission, the lack of needs assessments, and the absence of a separate policy ren-

der these prisoners invisible. This invisibility further translates into neglect, unequal treatment, and sometimes inhumane conditions. The Supreme Court’s directives are a significant intervention to change this situation. The Court clarified that the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016, applies equally to prisons, and that “reasonable accommodation” and “accessibility” are not mere acts of mercy or privilege, but rather legal rights. Furthermore, by mandating regular audits of disability-related facilities in prison premises, equal access to healthcare, and the provision of legal aid, the Court has laid the foundation for administrative accountability. This approach calls for viewing prisons not merely as disciplinary institutions but as rights-based reform homes. The reality is that prisoners with disabilities in Indian prisons face challenges on multiple levels. The first and most fundamental problem is accessibility. Most prison premises lack ramps, railings, accessible toilets, level floors, tactile paths, or clear signage. Stairs make even everyday activities impossible for wheelchair-using prisoners, while uneven floors and a lack of directional signs increase the risk of accidents for visually impaired prisoners. This situation is a direct violation of the constitutional principle of equal access. Additionally, medical neglect emerges as a serious problem. The lack of regular health checkups, access to specialist doctors, and timely provision of assistive devices exacerbates disability. In many cases, the lack of hearing aids, wheelchairs, canes, or other assistive devices leaves prisoners completely dependent on others. Delayed treatment not only worsens the disability but also adversely impacts mental health. Communication barriers further exacerbate this problem. The lack of sign language interpreters for hearing-impaired prisoners, the lack of

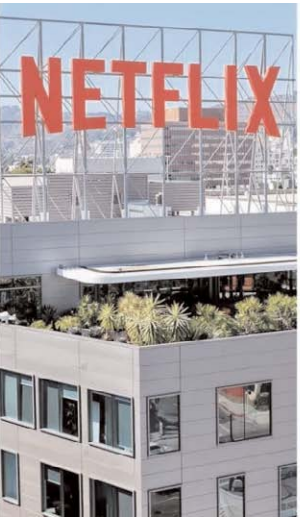
Braille or audio materials for the visually impaired, and the lack of plain language information for prisoners with intellectual or psychosocial disabilities—all result in their near-isolation from prison rules, disciplinary proceedings, legal processes, and grievance redressal mechanisms. This situation undermines the right to equal access to justice. The social status of prisoners with disabilities makes them even more vulnerable. In overcrowded prisons, they are more vulnerable to ridicule, neglect, or violence. Prisoners with psychosocial disabilities often face unjustified solitary confinement or harsh disciplinary measures, even though their condition demands specialized care and treatment. Thus, the prison environment becomes more of a source of suffering than punishment for them. From a constitutional perspective, this situation is a matter of serious concern. Article 14 guarantees the right to equality, Article 21 guarantees a life with dignity, and Article 39A makes it the state’s duty to ensure equal access to justice. All of these rights are equally effective within prison walls. The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016, establishes “reasonable accommodation” and “accessibility” as legal rights, while the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities provides a clear framework for the protection and inclusion of persons with disabilities in custody. Ignoring these standards undermines both India’s constitutional and international commitments. Against this backdrop, comprehensive and structural reforms are needed to make Indian prisons disability-inclusive. Adapting infrastructure to principles of universal design is essential, including ramps, accessible toilets, railings, tactile flooring, and clear signage. This improvement can be achieved through retrofitting existing prisons in a phased manner.

'A nightmare' - The battle over Warner Bros is turning Hollywood upside down

Disaster, catastrophe and nightmare. That's how Hollywood's creative workers describe the fall of the once mighty Warner Bros, as Netflix and Paramount battle to buy the historic studio and tinsel town braces for more upheaval and job losses. Warner's decline and impending sale – whether it's to Paramount Skydance as a whole, or to Netflix cut up in parts – is being mourned in Hollywood, where a historic production slump has already battered the entertainment industry. The loss of the studio, which has created iconic films ranging from Casablanca and Goodfellas to Batman and Harry Potter, likely means more job cuts and definitely means one less buyer of film and TV projects. Interviews with dozens of actors, producers and camera crews by the BBC reveal an industry attempting to weigh the lesser of two evils: control by a tech giant blamed for killing movie theatres (Netflix) or billionaires seen as too cosy with President Trump (Paramount). "David Ellison is a right-wing billionaire Trumper," a camera assistant said of the Paramount



Skydance CEO who is the son of billionaire Oracle co-founder and close Trump ally Larry Ellison. "Netflix is much more historically inclined to not micromanage production. If Netflix gets the deal they want, they will buy Warner Bros' crown jewels – the 102-year-old studio, HBO, and its vast archive of films and TV shows – leaving Warner's legacy TV networks, like CNN, TNT Sports and Discovery, for another buyer. Meanwhile, Paramount Skydance's \$108bn (£81bn) hostile takeover bid for Warner Bros includes backing from



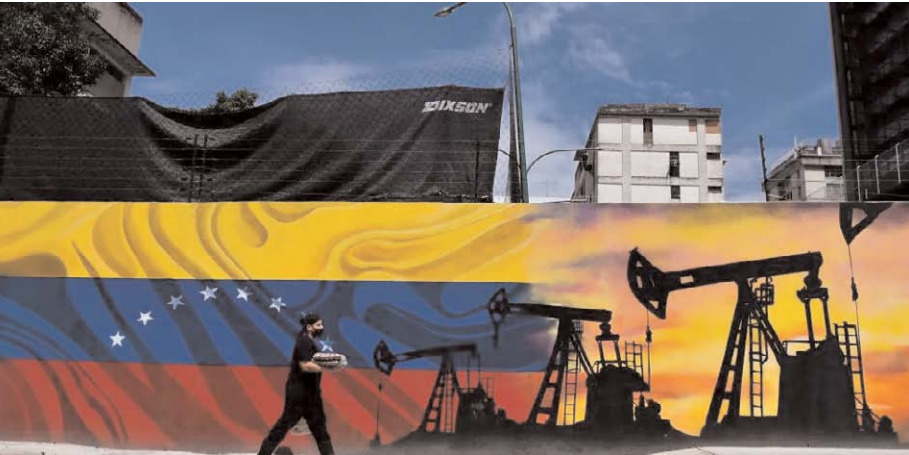
Saudi Arabia, Abu Dhabi, Qatar and a fund started by Jared Kushner, US President Donald Trump's son-in-law. It has raised concerns about the possibility of censorship and government overreach. President Trump added fuel to the fire when he said "it's imperative that CNN be sold". The Warner Bros deal is the latest in a long line of major shake-ups in Hollywood since the pandemic. Film and TV productions ground to a halt in 2023 during simultaneous actor and writer strikes. Seemingly everyone in Hollywood was working in 2022 as studios and stream-



ing services went into creative overdrive after Covid shutdowns. But when the labour strikes ended, the production boom never returned. The fallout has meant that many media companies have had to close doors - or merge. David Ellison's Skydance Media bought Paramount, another legendary Hollywood studio, earlier this summer, leading to thousands of job losses. When Warner Bros put up a for-sale sign, Paramount launched an eager campaign to buy the company. But the studio ultimately announced a deal with Netflix. A spurned Paramount then

went direct to Warner Bros Discovery shareholders with a hostile takeover offer that they say is "superior" to the Netflix deal. Whether they're rooting for Paramount or Netflix or another potential buyer, the one thing people in Hollywood seem to agree on is this story's villain - Warner Bros Discovery CEO David Zaslav, who earned \$51.9m last year as Warner Bros lost more than \$11bn and the company's stock fell nearly 7%. "I watched Warner Bros struggle since David Zaslav became the CEO and ran it into the ground," says an actor who lost his home after his work dried up. He did not want to be identified because he still hopes to work for Netflix and Paramount. More than one person compared Mr Zaslav to the fictional movie character Gordon Gekko who proclaims "greed is good" in the 1987 movie Wall Street. Mr Zaslav took over in 2022 during another massive merger of Discovery, Inc., which he ran, with AT&T's WarnerMedia, creating Warner Bros Discovery. The consolidation saw several thousand jobs cut - and lavish pay packages for Mr Zaslav.

Venezuela says Trump wants its oil. But is that the case?



Venezuelan leader Nicolás Maduro says escalating pressure from the US comes down to one thing: Washington wants to grab the South American nation's vast oil reserves. This week the American military seized an oil tanker, which was allegedly carrying Venezuelan oil being shipped in violation of US sanctions, and threatened action against other ships. The move followed a series of military strikes on Venezuelan boats, which the US alleges are drug-trafficking vessels. President Donald Trump has called on Maduro to leave office, accusing him of sending narcotics and murderers to the US. So is it Venezuela's oil that Trump really wants? And would it

actually be worth it? How much oil does Venezuela have? It is true that with an estimated 303 billion barrels, Venezuela is home to the world's largest proven oil reserves. But the amount of oil the country actually produces today is tiny by comparison. Output has dropped off sharply since the early 2000s, as former President Hugo Chavez and then the Maduro administration tightened control over the state-run oil company, PDVSA, leading to an exodus of more experienced staff. Though some Western oil firms, including the US company Chevron, are still active in the country, their operations have shrunk significantly as the US has widened sanctions and tar-

geted oil exports, aiming to curb Maduro's access to a key economic lifeline. Sanctions - which the US first put in place in 2015 during President Barack Obama's administration over alleged human rights violations - have also left the country largely cut off from the investment and the parts it needs. "The real challenge they've got is their infrastructure," says Callum Macpherson, head of commodities at Investec. In November, Venezuela produced an estimated 860,000 barrels per day, according to the latest oil market report from the International Energy Agency. That is barely a third of what it was 10 years ago and accounts for less than 1% of world oil consumption.

US TikTok investors in limbo as deal set to be delayed again

A billionaire investor keen on buying TikTok's US operations has told the BBC he has been left in limbo as the latest deadline for the app's sale looms. The US has repeatedly delayed the date by which the platform's Chinese owner, ByteDance, must sell or be blocked for American users. US President Donald Trump appears poised to extend the deadline for a fifth time on Tuesday. "We're just standing by and waiting to see what happens," investor Frank McCourt told BBC News. "But if the moment arrives, we're prepared to move forward... we've raised the capital to buy it - we'll see." The popular short-form video app was due to be banned or sold in the US in January in accordance with a law passed by Congress in 2024. Lawmakers said at the time ByteDance's links to the Chinese government threatened national security, and expressed fears Beijing could force the company to hand over data



on US users. It's a concern TikTok and its owners have always said is unfounded. The law was signed by President Joe Biden while he was still in office and was upheld by the Supreme Court in early 2025. Deal done? Trump and members of his administration have previously claimed a TikTok deal was done, and had the blessing of Chinese President Xi Jinping. The president has also said "sophisticated" US investors would acquire the app, including two of his allies: Oracle chairman Larry Ellison and Dell Technologies' Michael Dell. Members of

the Trump administration had indicated the deal would be formalised in a meeting between Trump and Xi in October - however it concluded without an agreement being reached. Neither TikTok's Chinese owner ByteDance nor Beijing have since announced approval of a sale, despite Trump's claims. This time there are no such claims a deal is imminent, leading most analysts to conclude another extension is inevitable. Without naming Trump's hand-selected investors, Mr McCourt told the BBC he was concerned "about a concentration of

Highlights

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A billionaire investor keen on buying TikTok's US operations has told the BBC he has been left in limbo as the latest deadline for the app's sale looms.

power and influence because platforms like TikTok are very influencing". He is part of a group of investors including Reddit co-founder Alexis Ohanian and Canadian investor Kevin O'Leary. "My hope would be that whatever happens, that it is shut down or sold, and lands in the hands of people that comply with the law," he said. He said he wants to operate TikTok without any of its Chinese technology, including its powerful recommendation algorithm, and that his Project Liberty has developed other technology that could be used instead.

Hyderabad, December 2025: The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) released its Independent Drive Test (IDT) findings for the State of Andhra Pradesh under Andhra Pradesh Licensed Service Area (LSA), covering extensive city routes of Eluru City in the month of November 2025. The drive tests conducted under the supervision of the TRAI Regional Office, Hyderabad, were designed to capture real-world mobile network performance across diverse usage environments - Urban Zones, Institutional Hotspots, rural residential areas etc. Between 11th November 2025 to 13th November 2025, TRAI teams conducted detailed tests for 348.6 Kms Eluru City drive test, and 8 Hotspot locations. Technologies evaluated included 2G, 3G, 4G, and 5G, reflecting the service experience of users across multiple handset capabilities. The findings of the IDT



have been intimated to all the TSPs concerned. Key Parameters Assessed: a) Voice Services: Call Setup Success Rate (CSSR), Drop Call Rate (DCR), Call Setup Time, Call Silence Rate, Speech Quality (MOS), Coverage. b) Data Services:

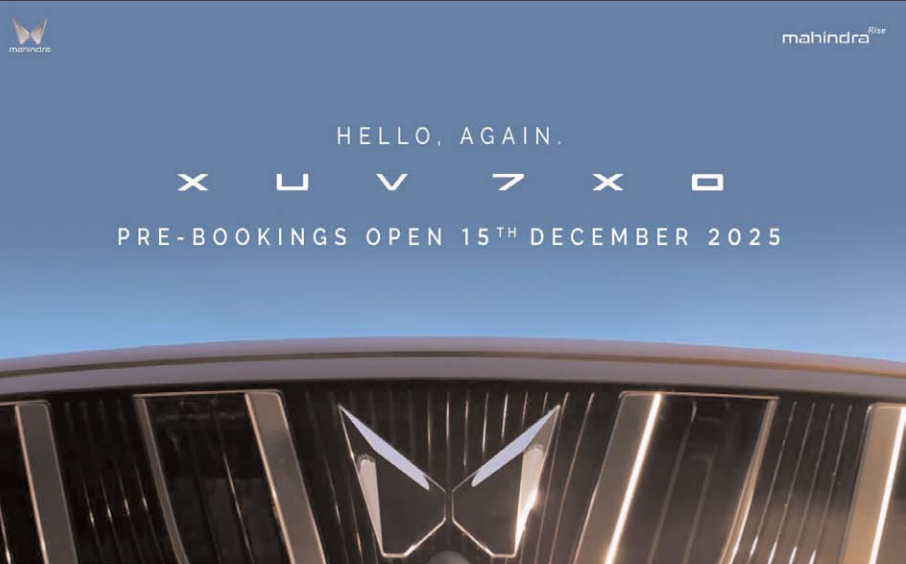
Download / Upload Throughput, Latency, Jitter, Packet Drop Rate, and Video Streaming Delay. The overall mobile network performance in Eluru city and surrounding areas is summarized below: Call Setup Success Rate-

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The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) released its Independent Drive Test (IDT) findings for the State of Andhra Pradesh under Andhra Pradesh Licensed Service Area (LSA), covering extensive city routes of Eluru City in the month of November 2025.

Airtel, BSNL, RJIL and VIL have 100.00%, 92.84%, 100.00% and 96.90% call setup success rate respectively in auto-selection mode (5G/4G/3G/2G) Drop Call Rate - Airtel, BSNL, RJIL and VIL drop call rate is 0.00%, 1.80%, 0.24% and 0.00% respectively in auto-selection mode CSSR: Call Setup Success Rate (in %), CST: Call Setup Time (in seconds), DCR: Drop Call Rate (in %) & MOS: Mean Opinion Score.

Mahindra to Commence Pre-Bookings for Its Premium SUV – XUV 7XO, Starting 12:00 PM, 15th December 2025



Mumbai, December 2025: Mahindra & Mahindra Ltd., India's leading SUV manufacturer, today announced the opening of pre-bookings for its hi-tech, trendsetter, premium SUV – XUV 7XO. Customers can pre-book starting at 12:00 PM on

15th December 2025, with a booking amount of INR 21000, to secure an early booking sequence for the highly awaited SUV. Customers will have the flexibility to select their preferred dealership, fuel type, and transmission at the time of pre-

booking. The XUV 7XO will be offered with two fuel options – petrol and diesel – available with both manual and automatic transmissions. The pre-booking option will be available across all Mahindra dealerships and the company's online channels.

CREATIVE INDUSTRIES 'INCREDIBLY WORRIED' ABOUT OPENAI-DISNEY DEAL

A union representing workers in the creative industries says there is "real concern" among its members about a \$1bn (£740m) deal which will see Disney characters brought to ChatGPT and video-generation tool Sora. It is the first major studio to license parts of its catalogue to OpenAI, which makes the tools. Fans will be able to generate and share pictures and videos of more than 200 characters from Disney's franchises, including Pixar, Marvel and Star Wars. "Everyone in the entertainment industry, especially all the creative talent, are incredibly worried about what the implications are," said Sag-Afra executive director Duncan Crabtree-Ireland. He said the two companies had contacted the union - which represents 170,000 media professionals worldwide - to say the agreement specifically rules out the use of the image, likeness or voice of human performers. But he said it was still a worrying development. "There's real concern because nobody wants to see human



creativity given away to AI models," he told BBC News. "An important moment for our industry" The move comes as OpenAI faces mounting questions about how its rapidly advancing tech is used - and as anxiety in Hollywood increases over the impact of AI on the creative industries. According to a blog post announcing the news, the list of eligible characters include those from Disney films Zootopia, Moana and Encanto - as well as characters like Star Wars' Luke

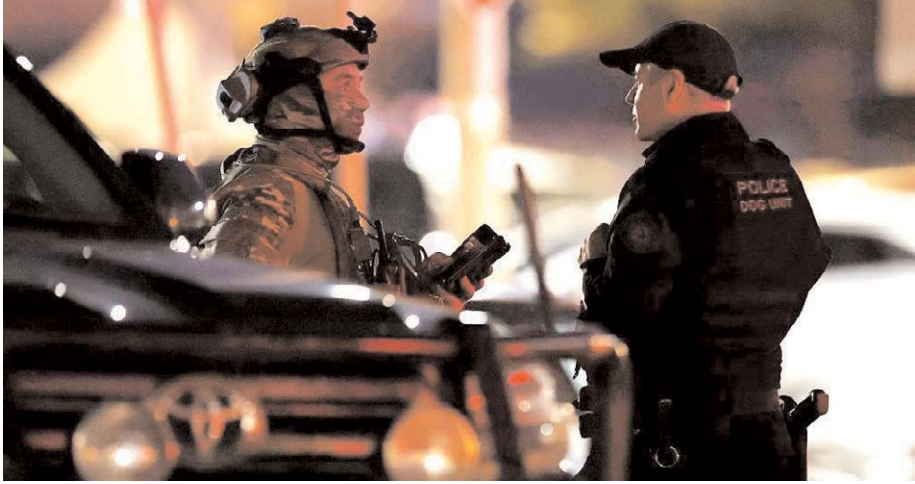
Skywalker and Marvel's Deadpool. It, of course, also includes Mickey and Minnie Mouse. But quite how the characters will sound remains unclear, as Disney said the agreement "does not include any talent likenesses or voices". "The rapid advancement of artificial intelligence marks an important moment for our industry," Disney boss Bob Iger said. "Through this collaboration with OpenAI we will thoughtfully and responsibly extend the reach of our

storytelling." People are expected to be able to begin making the videos and images in Sora and ChatGPT in early 2026. The deal comes amid reports Disney lawyers sent Google a cease-and-desist letter on Wednesday accusing the tech firm of infringing its copyrights "on a massive scale". The BBC has asked Google for a response. Joel Smith, intellectual property partner at law firm Simmons & Simmons, said Disney's OpenAI deal

showed "rights owners and major AI developers are moving fast to strike collaborative licensing deals to access content for training and future use". Equity, the entertainment trade union, says actors' rights need to be protected. The group is currently balloting thousands of performers asking if they are willing to refuse being digitally scanned on set to push for stronger AI safeguards. Cathy Sweet, Equity's head of TV and Film, said the deal between Disney and OpenAI reinforced "exactly why our members are fighting for AI protections". "The recorded material that will be sold on as part of this eye-watering big money deal are the result of creatives' professional work, and their rights must be protected," she said. Content concerns Sora's hyper-realistic videos have proven to be popular in the US, but there have been significant criticisms from those claiming it has also led to some people creating offensive deepfakes of dead public figures.

Eleven killed in shooting targeting Jewish community at Australia's Bondi Beach, police say

With British Jews killed and injured in the Heaton Park Synagogue attack in Manchester on Yom Kippur in October, the UK's Jewish Leadership Council - which represents the largest Jewish communal organisations - has called on the police and government to protect Jewish events here celebrating Hanukkah. The Jewish festival starts this evening and lasts for eight days. "Chanukah is a joyous festival, when Jewish communities gather at public locations around the world to share the light. We are devastated and angered that in Sydney, Jews appear to have been targeted once again for being Jewish," it says. "We know that such hatred also exists in this country, as we are still reeling from the attack on a synagogue in Manchester on Yom Kippur. "As we prepare to celebrate Chanukah over the next eight nights, we call on government and law enforcement to work with our community to protect



Jewish life in the UK and ensure that events this week can go ahead safely. We must not let hatred extinguish the festival of light." There's a lot police can't - or won't - say yet. One question they did answer: this was very clearly a terrorist attack, they said. Who the gunmen are - how many of them even - and their motive is still unclear. Officials wouldn't answer any questions about those who

died either, out of respect for families who are still being notified. "It's too early to give that information," was the most frequent refrain. But Commissioner Mal Lanyon sought to assure the public, especially the Jewish community, they're throwing everything at this investigation. Today's incident has taken place in the quiet residential area of North Bondi, known to be the more family-friendly

section of the world famous beach. Many families with young children live here as well as young couples. The Jewish festival was being held on a green right next to a large playground and just across the road is a primary school. It is also right by the main stretch of restaurants and gelato shops, and wading pools for kids. Just hours ago the streets in the area were filled with thousands of people,

young and old, enjoying the sunny weather. Now they are empty, save for the numerous police vehicles, as the neighbourhood reels from the shocking attack. The BBC's Katy Watson has been speaking to eyewitnesses from the scene in Bondi. Nico is from the US but has lived in Bondi for the past six months. He was walking to meet friends and go surfing when he heard "a bunch of pops" and people started sprinting in all directions. He thought it might be firecrackers initially. Nico didn't see the gunman but says the shots "felt really close". His reaction was: "Just run." While police arrived "pretty quick", it felt like the shots were going off for an "eternity", he says. British man Fin Green also thought he heard fireworks going off. He was in his apartment at the time and went to the window to look out. He says he saw a man on top of a white car "letting shots off". He also says he saw people being shot

down. Others started "running and screaming", heading towards his apartment block. Green says he shut his blinds and hid in his wardrobe, trying to stay as secure as he could. If you're just joining us, here are the key things you need to know about today's shooting at Bondi Beach: Eleven people have died - as well as one of two gunmen - in what police have declared a terrorist incident at Bondi Beach targeting the Jewish community. The second gunman is in custody. A child is believed to be among 29 others taken to hospital in serious conditions, as are two police officers. Improvised explosive devices (IEDs) were found in a car linked to one of the gunmen - they are being removed from the scene. Eyewitnesses described seeing "bodies lying on the floor" - while BBC Verify has verified footage showing at least seven bodies on the ground at a Hanukkah event at Bondi Beach Park. Footage showed a man.

FIVE ARRESTED OVER PLOT TO ATTACK GERMAN CHRISTMAS MARKET



Five men have been arrested in Germany suspected of being involved in a plot to drive a vehicle into people at a Christmas market. Three Moroccans, an Egyptian and a Syrian were detained on Friday over the plan to target a market in the southern Bavarian state. Authorities said they suspected an "Islamist motive". Prosecutors said the Egyptian - a 56-year-old - was alleged to have "called for a vehicle attack... with the aim of killing or injuring as many people as possible". The Moroccans

allegedly agreed to carry out the attack. Officials in Germany have been on high alert after previous attacks at Christmas markets, including in Magdeburg last December that killed six people. Authorities did not say when the planned attack was supposed to take place or which market was the target, though said they believed it to be one in the Dingolfing-Landau area, north east of Munich. German newspaper Bild reported the Egyptian man was an imam at a mosque in the area."

Bondi attack on Jewish community 'sickening' says Starmer



The attack targeting the Jewish community at a Hanukkah event in Australia is "sickening", Sir Keir Starmer has said. At least 11 people were killed in the shooting at Bondi Beach on Sunday and a further 29 taken to hospital, according to police. In a statement on X, the UK prime minister said: "The United Kingdom will always stand with Australia and the Jewish community." He added that the government was working with Community Security Trust (CST), a Jewish security organisation, on the policing of Hanukkah events in the UK. The Metropolitan Police said it was increasing its "police presence, carrying out additional community patrols and engaging with the Jewish community to understand what more we can do". "It is an awful reality that Jewish communities across the world continue to face a higher level of threat," the force said in a statement. "At a time when London's Jewish

communities are coming together to begin the celebration of Hanukkah, we know this attack will be the cause of not just terrible upset but also significant heightened concern about safety." In October, two people were killed in an attack at a synagogue in Manchester on Yom Kippur, the holiest day in the Jewish religious calendar. On Sunday, the UK's Jewish Leadership Council (JLC) called on the police and government to protect events celebrating Hanukkah which begins this evening and lasts for eight days. Hanukkah, also known as Chanukah, is a festival of light usually observed in December. "We are devastated and angered that in Sydney, Jews appear to have been targeted once again for being Jewish," the JLC said in a statement. "We know that such hatred also exists in this country, as we are still reeling from the attack on a synagogue in Manchester on Yom Kippur.

Indian man prays for Union min Kiren Rijiju in Makkah



An Indian man who was on an Umrah visit to Makkah, Saudi Arabia prayed for the well being of Union minister Kiren Rijiju. In a video shared on social media, the man

is heard praying in front of the Kaaba, "Allah has given me an opportunity to perform Umrah, and it is impossible that I come to Makkah and not pray for Mr Rijiju," the man is hear saying. The pilgrim prayed for the well being of the Union Parliamentary affairs minister and for the peace and prosperity of India. "I pray that you continue to serve the people and that all your efforts are fruitful," the pilgrim said in his supplication. Responding to the video, Rijiju said, "May Allah keep you safe. Thank you very, very much for this most heart-touching prayer for me in Mecca Mukarramah"

'PERSON OF INTEREST' DETAINED OVER BROWN UNIVERSITY SHOOTING, POLICE SAY

A person of interest has been detained in connection with a US shooting at Brown University that left two people dead, police said. Nine others were injured when a gunman opened fire at the university in Providence, Rhode Island, on Saturday. Police confirmed on Sunday a person had been detained, and an earlier order for people on the Brown campus and surrounding areas to shelter had been lifted. Providence Mayor Brett Smiley said seven people remained in stable condition, one of them was in critical but stable condition, and another was discharged. The gunman opened fire in a classroom at around 16:00 local time (21:00 GMT) on Saturday at the Holley engineering building at the eastern end



of Brown's campus, according to officials. The identities of those killed or injured have not yet been released, but Brown University President Christina Paxson told reporters in a press briefing on Saturday that all the victims, including those killed and wounded, were students. In a statement released by the university on Sunday, Paxson said that some areas of campus were

but we will do all we can," she said. Police had earlier released CCTV footage of a male suspect walking away from the scene wearing all black clothing. Officers said a firearm was not found in a sweep of the building. After the person was detained on Sunday, police chief Oscar Perez confirmed officers were not looking for anyone else and were working with prosecutors to collect evidence. Smiley said the city should be able to "breathe a little easier" after the shelter order was lifted. "We have trained for this moment, but this is not something that any community should have to train for," he added. Hundreds of police officers and federal agents were sent to Providence on Saturday to find the suspect.

'Never give up': Belarusian prisoners celebrate release after US lifts sanctions

Rumours of a major prisoner release from Belarus had been swirling for a couple of days. But no one would reveal the names on the list, or the exact number, until everyone was safely out, finally free. In total, 123 political prisoners have been released, including some of the best-known names among Belarusian opposition politicians, human rights activists and journalists. Maria Kolesnikova, the protest leader with a famous red-lipsticked smile, was on the release list. A video of her jumping for joy and hugging other former prisoners, overjoyed to be reunited, was soon flying around



social media. Then came another, on a bus out of Belarus, where she thanked everyone who'd helped bring this moment about. "It's a feeling of incredible happiness to see those who are dear to me, to hug them and realise we are all free," Masha, as she's best known, told the camera, her lips

already painted red again. The first sunset of her freedom was a thing of great beauty, she said. "But I also think of those who are not yet free and I await the moment when we can all embrace, when all are free." Out too is Viktor Babaryka, a banker who tried to run for president in

2020 but was locked up before the elections even began. The Nobel Peace prize winner Ales Bialiatski has also been released from a 10-year sentence. All were imprisoned for their opposition to the authoritarian rule of Alexander Lukashenko, whose security forces crushed the mass protests of 2020 with brutal force. They were the biggest challenge to his rule that he has ever faced. The prisoners' release now is the result of long and complex negotiations led by the US that culminated in a two-day visit to Minsk this week by Donald Trump's new special envoy, John Coale.

Saudi Arabia prepares to launch air taxis in major cities



In a major step towards next-gen urban mobility, Saudi Arabia is preparing to launch air taxis in its major cities. The Kingdom is partnering with US based firm Archer Aviation for this initiative. Archer Aviation is a prominent company that manufactures vertical take-off and landing (VTOL) aircraft. Saudi Arabia and Archer Aviation signed an agreement regarding air taxis during CoMotion global summit in Riyadh, where Saudi officials outlined how advanced air mobility will reshape travel in the Kingdom's major cities. The agreement is part of Saudi Arabia's plan to develop advanced air mobility (AAM) systems, aligned with the Kingdom's aviation strategy and roadmap for next-generation transportation. The goal is to turn Saudi cities into hubs for future air travel and sustainable mobility. According to a report by Saudi Gazette, as per the agreement Saudi Arabia

and Archer will work together to upgrade and expand the regulatory framework for VTOL aircraft. This includes aligning safety and certification standards with the US Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and supporting a phased rollout of air taxi services. The agreement will allow a series of test flights in Saudi Arabia, proof-of-concept demonstrations, assessments to prepare infrastructure, and public awareness efforts. In a statement, General Authority of Civil Aviation (GACA) Executive Vice President Suleiman Al-Muheimeed said, "partnering with global innovators like Archer strengthens the regulatory and operational foundations needed to integrate VTOL aircraft into the national aviation network." He added that the initiative supports the AAM roadmap and reinforces Saudi Arabia's ambition to become a leader in advanced air mobility.

Israel strikes Gaza again Leaving multiple dead

Israel said it killed a senior Hamas commander on Saturday in a strike on a vehicle inside Gaza. In a joint statement, the Israeli military and security agency Shin Bet announced it had "eliminated" Raed Saad, the head of weapons production for Hamas's military wing, the Qassam Brigades, in Gaza city. Saad had been regarded as one of the most prominent Qassam commanders and led several brigades during Hamas's 7 October attacks on Israeli communities east of Gaza City. The Hamas-run Civil Defence spokesman, Mahmoud Basal, told the BBC that four people were killed in the strike. He said multiple passers-by were also injured by the blast. A local Hamas official in Gaza told the BBC that the strike

also killed Saad's aide and another lower-ranking official identified as Abu Imad al-Laban. The BBC is prevented by Israel from reporting independently from inside Gaza and is unable to verify details of the incident. The IDF and ISA joint statement added that Saad had been "responsible for the deaths of many soldiers" killed in the Gaza Strip as the result of explosive devices. Saad is believed to be a member of the newly formed five-member leadership military council established since a ceasefire took hold in October. Israel has attempted to kill him on multiple occasions. One of the most notable attempts was during a surprise Israeli operation in Gaza City in March 2024, when Israeli forces reportedly sought to



arrest or kill him. Sources at the time said Saad had been inside the targeted complex but managed to escape moments before the raid. He has long been considered one of Israel's most wanted Hamas figures, with Israeli attempts to kill him spanning more than two decades. Saturday's attack happened on the Palestinian-controlled side of the so-called

Yellow Line which has divided Gaza since an unstable US-led ceasefire came into effect on 10 October. Israeli forces control the area to the east of the line, which includes just over half of the Gaza Strip. The first phase of US president Donald Trump's 20-point plan for peace in the region required the return of all 20 living and 28 dead hostages

taken in the Hamas-led attack on southern Israel on 7 October 2023. About 1,200 people were killed in the attack and more than 250 people were taken hostage. All have been returned except for the remains of an Israeli police officer, Ran Gvili, 24, who is believed to have been killed while fighting Hamas gunmen in Kibbutz Alumim. Since then, according to Gaza's Hamas-run health ministry more than 70,000 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli military action. The diplomatic focus is now shifting to the next stage of President Trump's plan which would require the disarmament of Hamas as part of what it calls the de-radicalisation and redevelopment of Gaza. It envisages Gaza being run by the "temporary transitional

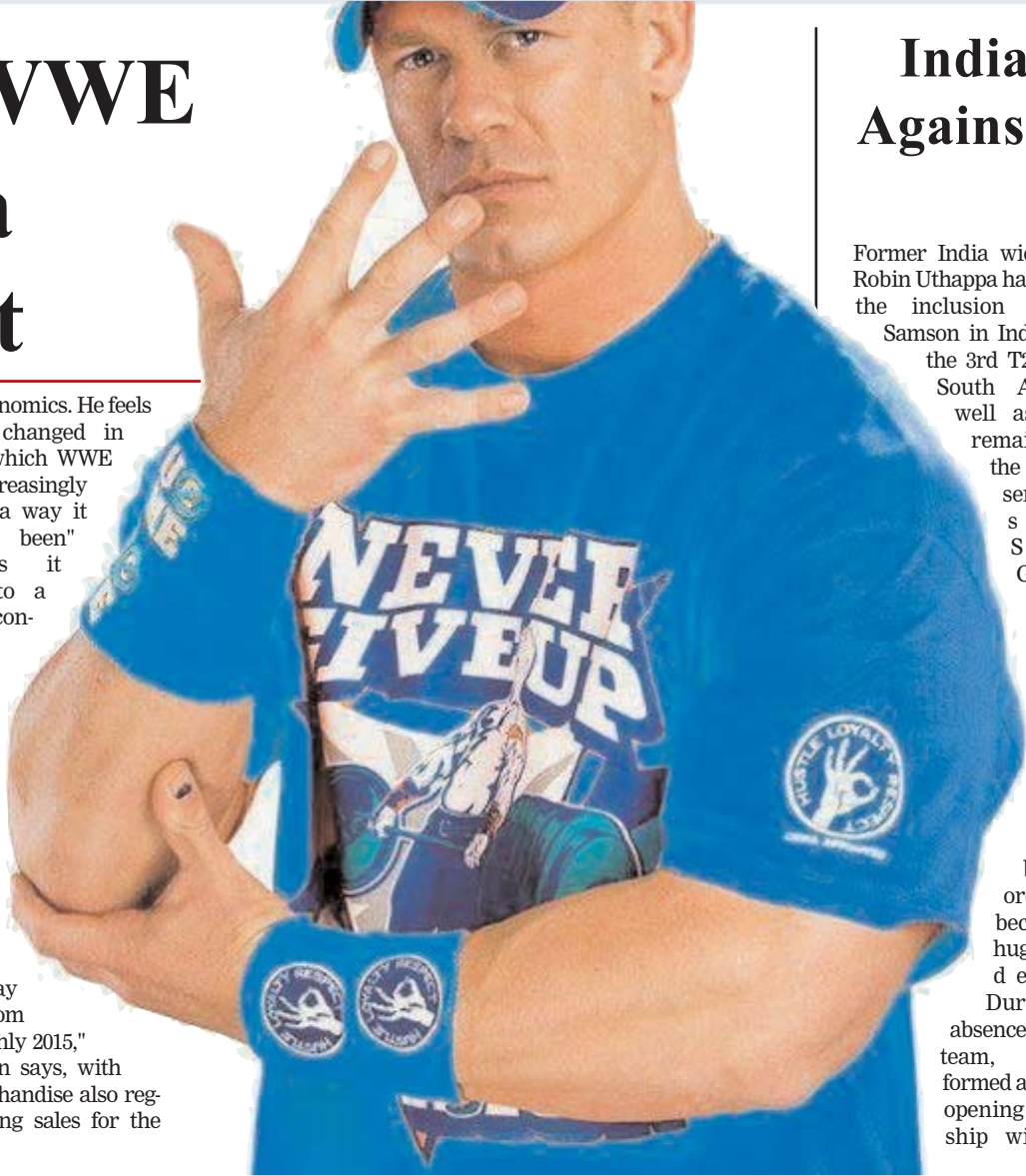
governance of a technocratic, apolitical Palestinian committee," overseen by a "Board of Peace" chaired by Trump. Security would be provided by an International Stabilisation Force although its make up remains unclear. The eventual aim is for a reformed Palestinian Authority to take control of the territory, and for Israeli forces to withdraw, after which "the conditions may finally be in place for a credible pathway to Palestinian self-determination and statehood". Many aspects of the plan are controversial in Israel where prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu has repeatedly rejected calls for the establishment of a Palestinian state. Trump is due to meet Netanyahu to discuss the plan in the US on 29 December.

The making of a WWE legend: John Cena faces his final fight

The Last Time Is Now. It's the name of the tournament in which 16 wrestling giants have been competing to take on John Cena in his final fight before retirement. And that final fight is now - Saturday night - in Washington DC, bringing the curtain down on an illustrious career that has seen the American become one of wrestling's biggest and most bankable stars. In the 8,570 days since his debut, Cena has clinched 17 world titles and coined the iconic "You Can't See Me" catchphrase - but the 48-year-old's impact goes far beyond that. If you were to pose the question "who is John Cena?", depending on who you ask, the answers might vary from legendary WWE (World Wrestling Entertainment) superstar, to successful film actor, while some will say he's Mr Make-A-Wish (more

on that later). How to watch John Cena's last match: Start time: WWE Saturday Night's Main Event is scheduled to begin at 01:00 GMT on Sun 14 Dec Where to watch: In the UK, you can watch for free on WWE's official YouTube channel. Internationally it can be watched on Netflix, and on Peacock in the US 'An exceptional wrestling talent' Since his 2002 debut, there's been an evolution in his own wrestling character - transitioning from "ruthless aggression" rookie, to a "Doctor of Thuganomics" rapper, and eventually a heroic character known for a "Never Give Up" attitude. Despite criticism from some fans of his in-ring ability, with occasional chants of "you can't wrestle" through the years, "there's no doubt that he's an exceptional wrestling talent", says Brandon Thurston, editor and owner of wrestling web-

site, Wrestlenomics. He feels something changed in 2005, after which WWE became "increasingly scripted in a way it had not been" before, as it entered into a more controlled, family friendly PG era. But Cena managed to thrive. "He's definitely been the biggest draw over the time which I would say stretches from 2005 to roughly 2015," Mr Thurston says, with Cena's merchandise also regularly topping sales for the company.



India Predicted XI For 3rd T20I Against South Africa: Ex-KKR Star Names Big Omission

Former India wicketkeeper Robin Uthappa has urged for the inclusion of Sanju Samson in India's XI for the 3rd T20I against South Africa, as well as for the remainder of the five-match series. Ever since Shubman Gill returned to the T20I side after a lengthy hiatus,

Samson's batting order has become a huge topic of debate. During Gill's absence from the team, Samson formed a successful opening partnership with south-



paw Abhishek Sharma. However, Gill's struggles at the top have ignited talks of Samson's inclusion as an opener. Uthappa, however, wants Samson to bat at No. 3 ahead of Tilak Varma and Suryakumar Yadav. He also suggested that Gill should continue to open with Abhishek, who is currently the No. 1 T20I batter in ICC rankings. "I would like to see Shubman and Abhishek Sharma opening the batting. Complete left field here, Sanju Samson at No. 3, Suryakumar Yadav at No. 4

and Tilak Varma at No. 5, and then so on and so forth," Uthappa said on his YouTube channel. The 40-year-old wants the management to drop Jitesh Sharma from the XI, which will allow head coach Gautam Gambhir to play three all-rounders. "You still have Hardik Pandya, Shivam Dube and Axar Patel. So your eight batters are sorted, and you have five bowlers. I would love to see that XI. I think that would be the ideal XI for India," the 2007 T20 World Cup winner added.

Cordina closer to two-weight title dream after win

Joe Cordina is in line for a shot at becoming a two-weight world champion after dominating Gabriel Flores Jr in California on the way to a unanimous victory on points. Wales' former IBF super-featherweight belt holder Cordina outboxed his American opponent, with judges scoring the contest 117-110 115-112 114-113. The fight at the Adventist Health Arena in Stockton was billed as a final eliminator for the WBO lightweight world title which was won by Abdullah Mason in an epic encounter with Sam Noakes in November. Cordina, 34, was docked a point in the sixth round for rabbit punching, but was more in control than the judges' cards suggest-



ed. "I got the win, but it wasn't exactly the way I wanted to do it," said Cordina. "You can't come in and nick a fight off me. I kept applying pressure and forced him to the

ropes, and he couldn't keep up with the pace." The victory in Flores Jr's backyard is a second win in the lightweight division for Cordina, who returned from a 14-month lay-off

with a hard-fought points win over Jaret Gonzalez Quiroz in July to claim the vacant WBO global lightweight title. Cordina now boasts a professional record of 19 wins and one defeat (with nine KOs), his only loss coming to Anthony Cacace in May 2024 when he lost his 130lb title in Riyadh. Flores, 25, did give the Cardiff-born fighter a scare in round seven with an uppercut that buckled his knees, but the American saw a six-fight winning streak ended to slip to 27-3 (eight KOs). Cordina, who went into his first bout in America ranked number six by the WBO, should now emerge as their number one contender and mandatory challenger to Mason.

Why Is Jasprit Bumrah Not Playing 3rd T20I vs South Africa? BCCI Breaks Silence: "Gone Back Home"

Fans were left surprised as India pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah did not feature in the playing XI for their third T20I against South Africa. India captain Suryakumar Yadav confirmed during the toss that Bumrah had gone back home due to personal reasons. Later, the BCCI confirmed that further information on Bumrah's participation in the remaining matches in the T20I series will be provided in due course. Bumrah - who recently became the first Indian bowler to take 100 international wickets in all three formats - was replaced by Harshit Rana in India's playing XI for the third T20I. All-rounder Axar Patel also missed out on the third T20I due to an illness.



The five-game series is level at 1-1 ahead of the third T20I, and a win for either of the two teams will give them the lead. With Axar and Jasprit unavailable, captain Suryakumar Yadav said Harshit Rana and Kuldeep Yadav have been

place, wonderful people, and a fantastic ground. Hopefully when we bat and bowl, we can give everyone some good entertainment." "Every game is important. The way they played in the second game showed the beauty of this sport. What matters most is how you come back, and that's what we want to do tonight, play our best game, enjoy ourselves, and be fearless. If we stay switched on for all three hours, that will be key for us. It looks like a good pitch," he said. India XI for 3rd T20I: Abhishek Sharma, Shubman Gill, Suryakumar Yadav (c), Tilak Varma, Hardik Pandya, Shivam Dube, Jitesh Sharma (wk), Harshit Rana, Arshdeep Singh, Kuldeep Yadav, and Varun Chakravarthy.

Cameron Green Breaks Silence On Stunning IPL 2026 Auction Decision: "Stuff-Up"



Australia cricket team all-rounder Cameron Green surprised a lot of fans when he registered himself as a 'batter' for the upcoming IPL 2026 auction. The decision led to a lot of discussion over his availability when it comes to bowling and some experts even claimed that his decision can guarantee a record-breaking bid for him considering batters come in the auction ahead of all-rounders. Green has finally broken his silence on the decision and confirmed that he will be available to bowl in the upcoming edition of the tournament. He also said that his manager had a 'stuff-up' and 'accidentally' registered him as a batter in the auction in place of his usual 'all-rounder' status. "I'll be good to bowl," Green said before Australia's training session in Adelaide on Sunday, as quoted by ESPNcricinfo. "I don't know if my manager would like to hear this, but there was a stuff-up on his end. He didn't mean to say 'batter'. I think he accidentally selected the wrong

box. It was pretty funny how it's all played out, but it was actually a stuff-up on his end." Green also said that he will be following the IPL 2026 auction and keeping a close eye on which team he ends up in and who will be his new teammates in the franchise. "I'm sure I will be [watching], with a few other guys. They're always good fun to watch. It's a bit of a lottery where you might go, but also who might be in your team, so it's always been fun to watch," Green said. Green is widely tipped to become the most expensive player at Tuesday's IPL 2026 auction in Abu Dhabi, with some predicting he could surpass the INR 27 crore (approx. AUD 4.5 million) record set by Rishabh Pant last year. Kolkata Knight Riders, holding the largest remaining budget, are the frontrunners to secure him. Listed with a base price of INR 2 crore (approx. AUD 333,000), Green will be among the first six players to go under the hammer after registering as a batter.

India Stick To 'No-Handshake' Policy Against Pakistan In U19 Asia Cup Despite Alleged ICC Request

The Indian cricket team continued their 'no-handshake policy' against Pakistan in the U19 Asia Cup 2025 despite alleged request from International Cricket Council (ICC). A report by PTI claimed that the ICC wanted politics to be kept away from the U19 competition and even requested for the handshakes to take place. In the past, Indian players did not shake hands with their Pakistan counterparts in the senior men's Asia Cup, Women's ODI World Cup and the Rising Stars Asia Cup T20 competition. The trend continued on Sunday during the U19 Asia Cup Group A match when the India captain Ayush Mhatre did not shake hands with Pakistan captain Farhan Yousaf after the toss. Earlier, PTI said that the ICC said that if India did not want



to shake hands with Pakistan, they will have to inform the match referee in advance. "The boys haven't been told anything. But obviously BCCI has given explicit instructions to its manager Anand Datar. Now if Indian boys don't shake hands with Pakistan team then match referee will have to be informed in advance." "We

know for a fact that ICC doesn't want politics to take front seat when it comes to junior cricket. So it is a case of both bad optics and public sentiment," a BCCI official in the know of things told PTI on the condition of anonymity. Coming to the match, Yousaf won the toss and decided to bowl first against India. The high-voltage match between

India U19 and Pakistan U19 was reduced to 49 overs per side due to rain. The Ayush Mhatre-led India U19 came into this contest after registering a massive 234-run win in their first fixture against the UAE on December 12. Vaibhav Suryavanshi was named Player of the Match for his blistering 171-run knock off 95 deliveries, including nine fours and 14 sixes. His knock helped India U19 to post a mammoth 433/6 in 50 overs. In response, UAE 19 were restricted to 199/7 and lost the one-sided match. Pakistan U19, on the other hand, thrashed Malaysia U19 by 297 runs in their opening fixture. Sameer Minhas was named Player of the Match for his fantastic unbeaten knock of 177 runs off 148 balls, with the help of 11 fours and eight sixes.

BANKES & NIGHTINGALE WIN SNOWBOARD CROSS WORLD CUP GOLD

Great Britain's Charlotte Bankes and Huw Nightingale claimed gold in the mixed team event at the Snowboard Cross World Cup in Cervinia, Italy. Nightingale, 24, finished third in the men's run to put the British team in a strong position before Bankes, 30, produced a stunning run on her return from injury to win the women's race and clinch gold for the team. Austria claimed silver ahead of France, who won bronze. Bankes won the Crystal Globe as overall winner in 2021-22 and 2022-23 but sustained a broken collarbone in April as she chased a third



Snowboard Cross World Cup title in four years. She was ruled out of the final

races of last season at Mont Sainte Anne, Canada and needed two rounds of sur-

gery to correct the injury, missing all of pre-season. "To see all the hard work from this summer's training paying off from Huw as well as this being Charlotte's first race back since injury, this was quite the victory," said GB Snowsport head coach Pat Sharples. Bankes was knocked out of the women's event at the quarter-finals stage on Saturday. Sunday's victory alongside Nightingale marks the pair's third World Cup podium in the mixed team event - two golds and one silver - and sits alongside the gold medal they won at the 2023 World Championships.

Lionel Messi Plays Football With Telangana CM Revanth Reddy



The Hyderabad crowd was on cloud nine as football superstar Lionel Messi attended the GOAT Cup exhibition match, an event that was part of his three-day tour to India. He reached the city in the evening and arrived at the Rajiv Gandhi International Stadium at around 7:55 PM IST. The Argentine icon also played football with Telangana Chief Minister Revanth Reddy and even scored an effortless goal. A video of the play is going viral on social media. Earlier in the day in Kolkata, about 50,000 spectators, many of whom had paid Rs 4,000 to Rs 12,000 - and in some cases up to Rs 20,000 in the black market - watched helplessly as a swarm of politicians, VVIPs, security person-

nel, and assorted hangers more interested in selfies than crowd control surrounded Messi, leaving the fans at the Salt Lake Stadium angry. Angry fans started the mayhem by hurling bottles - banned items in an otherwise sporting venue. Chairs were then ripped out and thrown. Fibreglass seats lay smashed across the pitch and the synthetic track. However, it was a totally different scene at the Rajiv Gandhi International Stadium later on the day. As Messi reached amid tight security, with the fans cheering in huge numbers for him. Notably, Luis Suaraz and Rodrigo de Paul, who have travelled with Messi to India, were also there with the player at the venue.

'Dekhlenge Saala' Ignites the Screen as Power Star Pawan Kalyan Brings Back His Vintage Swagger



The first single 'Dekhienge Saala' from the much-anticipated film Ustaada Bhagat Singh has been unveiled and it has instantly ignited massive excitement among fans and movie lovers alike. Packed with pulsating energy and dynamic choreography, the song captures Power Star Pawan Kalyan in his most celebrated avatar, radiating vintage swagger, raw intensity, and echoes of his iconic blockbuster song moments that defined an era. The song marks the grand reunion of

the blockbuster trio – Power Star Pawan Kalyan, director Harish Shankar, and music director Devi Sri Prasad. This trio has earlier delivered chart-topping music and memorable mass entertainers, and 'Dekhenge Saala' continues that winning streak. Director Harish Shankar, known for his sharp eye and exceptional musical sensibilities, once again demonstrates his expertise by crafting a song that blends mass appeal with contemporary flair, giving special

attention to every beat, movement, and visual detail. Music director Devi Sri Prasad turns up the tempo with high-energy, peppy beats that instantly hook the listener, while Bhaskarabhatla's lyrics stand out for being both catchy and motivational, perfectly complementing the film's fiery tone. Adding further firepower is Vishal Dadiani, whose powerful vocals inject the song with an infectious energy, making it a sure-shot crowd favourite.

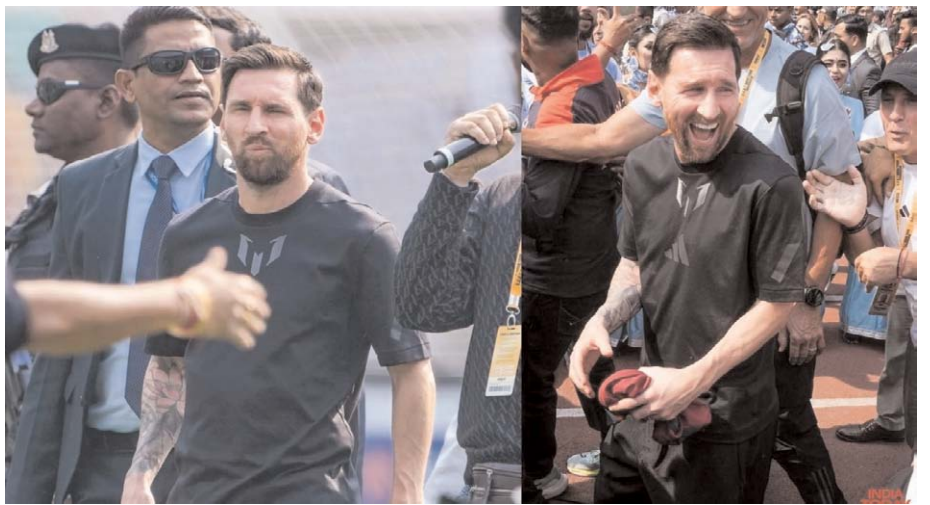
**“Nuvvu Naaku Nachav”
Re-release in 4K world-
wide on January 1, 2026**



24 years ago, on September 6, 2001, a magic happened on the Telugu screen. That was the movie "Nuvvu Naaku Nachav". The audience was satisfied enough to eat a feast. Even after watching this movie many times, this is content with a repeat value that still does not get bored. That is why the 2026 New Year is ready for a re-release in 4K with full technical features to chill with this movie. This movie was not fully

released abroad at that time. To fill that gap, this movie will be released worldwide on January 1. While making this movie, producer 'Sравanthi' Ravi Kishore was confident that this would be a great movie. This is the movie that introduced Victory Venkatesh in a new dimension . After blockbusters like 'Nuvve Kavali', this is the film Vijaya Bhaskar-Trivikram made with full passion.

60 Hyderabadis pay Rs 10 lakh each for photo with Messi: Report



Hyderabad: After completing the first leg of his India tour in Kolkata, football legend Lionel Messi is now on his way to Hyderabad. The excitement around his visit is growing with every passing hour, as fans eagerly wait to catch a glimpse of the Argentine superstar during his Hyderabad stop as part of the G.O.A.T Tour.

Rs 10 Lakh Photo Opportunity Creates Buzz

One of the most talked-about aspects of Messi's Hyderabad visit is the exclusive meet-and-greet photo session. Each ticket for this private interaction reportedly costs nearly Rs 10 lakh, including GST. The ticket offers a brief hand-

shake with Messi, a group photograph with six people per photo, buffet access, and entry to the venue. According to a latest report in Gulte, around 60 people from Hyderabad have already booked this premium photo shoot ticket, showing the extreme level of Messi fandom in the city. Reportedly, 40 more slots are available. Big Plans for Messi Hyderabad Event Messi will take part in a grand exhibition event at Uppal Stadium. The evening will feature musical performances starting from 5.30 pm, followed by Messi's arrival at the stadium around 7 to 7.30 pm. He is expected to stay on the

ground for nearly an hour. During the event, Messi will participate in a penalty shootout, interact with children as a UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador, conduct a special masterclass for 24 selected kids, and will be felicitated by the organisers. Telangana Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy is also expected to attend, which has further boosted the buzz. Kolkata Chaos Raises Questions While Messi's visit created massive excitement, his Kolkata appearance ended on a sour note. Fans were disappointed after Messi appeared at Salt Lake Stadium for only about 10 minutes.

NTR'S MARK IN STATE AS WELL AS NATIONAL POLITICS IS INDELIBLE: DAGGUBATI PURANDESWARI

Member of Parliament Smt. Daggubati Purandeswari declared that NTR's impression on state as well as national politics is imprinted forever, which cannot be replaced, and the name of NTR Rama Rao would exist as long as the sun as well as the moon would exist. Smt. Purandeswari, as a chief guest, attended a function at the FNCC, Hyderabad, on December 13, where she released the audio version of the Living History of the 1984 August Democratic Protection Movement. On the occasion, garlands were offered to the statue of NTR, and the song 'Maa Telugu Thalliki' was sung. The audio version of the living history book, produced by the NTR Literature Committee, which is chaired by Sri TDP

Janardhan, with the support of the Jayaprada Foundation, was also launched on the occasion. Notable political leader and former minister, Sri Mothkupalli Narasimhulu, Nandamuri Ramakrishna, film producer K. S. Rama Rao, Bollineni Krishnaiah, Chaitanya Raju, author of the living history book, Vikram Poola, Smt. Gayatri who has narrated the audio version), Rammohan Rao, who is a member of NTR Literature Committee, Gummadi Gopalakrishna, Mandava Satish, Madhusudanaraju Bikkabu, who is a Author Vikram Poola introduced the speakers earlier. In his welcome address, the chairman of the committee, Sri TDP Janardhan, referred to NTR's contributions to the



film industry, his set standards, and said that although there have been many chief ministers of Andhra Pradesh, NTR is a name that is remembered by everyone. NTR has been described as a dividing line in the politics of Andhra Pradesh, pre-NTR era, post-NTR era. On the occasion of the birth centenary of NTR.

he said that a committee has been formed with the aim of instilling the principles, ideologies, and values of NTR in the current as well as future generations. Along with the cooperation of all, publications in the form of many books on NTR are being released, and even an NTR YouTube Channel has been launched. The chief

guest, Smt. Purandeswari, delivered the keynote address. She said that the democratic protection movement of 1984 is one of the most defining events of NTR's life, apart from being a political event that influenced the politics of other states substantially. She remembered that before this democratic protection movement, there were instances of party switching, which happened with the intention of toppling the government in an unethical manner. But owing to the struggle brought about by the opposition parties, the media, and the democrats who supported NTR, the Anti-Defection Law came into existence with the 52nd Constitutional Amendment in 1985. She thanked the members of the NTR

Literature Committee and the chairman of NTR, TDP's Janardhan, for making NTR's ideology widespread. She also said that she had her own role in setting up NTR's statue in Parliament, as well as the release of a gold coin in his name, because she had been able to pay back a small part of her debt to her father. Senior leader Sri Mothkupalli Narasimhulu remembered his links with NTR and said that because of the political support he received to pursue his dreams, he has been able to become an MLA six times, as well as a minister. He described NTR as a great personality who has experienced poverty, when he said that NTR, who always had thoughts of the hungry and the welfare of the poor, would always be in his heart.

Sobhan Babu holds an everlasting place in the hearts of audiences and fans

Murali Mohan at the 'Soggadu' Golden Jubilee Curtain Raiser Event Senior actor Murali Mohan said that veteran actor Nata Bhushana Sobhan Babu holds a very special place both as an actor and as a human being. On the occasion of the film 'Soggadu', starring Sobhan Babu, completing 50 years, Suresh Productions and All India Sobhan Babu Seva Samithi are organizing a Golden Jubilee celebration in Hyderabad on the 19th of this month. On the same day, Suresh Productions will also be re-releasing the film. As a prelude to this, a Golden Jubilee Curtain Raiser event was held at Ramanaidu Studios, Hyderabad. Speaking at the event, Murali Mohan said: "My first opportunity was given by producer Atluri Poornachandra Rao, I was encouraged by Dasari Narayana Rao, and the one who invited me into the film industry was Sobhan Babu. I can never forget these three people in my life. I also acted with Sobhan Babu in the film 'Mugguru Mitrulu'. He was the very embodiment of discipline. Many people like me drew inspiration from him. For an important role in the film 'Athadu', produced under our banner, I even offered him a blank cheque and requested him to act. But



he declined. He told me that if he wanted to maintain the image he had as a handsome hero, he should not take up any other kinds of roles. It has been 17 years since he left us physically, and even before that, he had not acted for 13 years. That means even after 30 years, fans still remember Sobhan Babu and continue to organize such meaningful events. This clearly shows the love and respect audiences have for him.”

D. Suresh Babu, producer and head of Suresh Productions, said: “The film ‘Soggadu’, released in 1975, brought our production house both a good name and financial success. We are re-releasing the film using today’s advanced sound technology. We are also continuing the process of converting our films using AI technology.”

Producer Kaikala Nageswara Rao recalled that

he had made films like 'Adavi Raja' and 'Iddari Dongalu' with Sobhan Babu. He said that although Sobhan Babu was known as a class hero, he made mass films with him and delivered successful hits. Others who attended the event included Atluri Poornachandra Rao, K.S. Rama Rao, B.V.S.N. Prasad, Relangi Narasimha Rao, Raasi Movies Narasimha Rao, K. Muralimohan Rao, former MLA Jesta Ramesh Babu, All India Sobhan Babu Seva Samithi Chairman Sudhakar Babu, Convener Sai Kamaraju, Pudi Srinivas, B. Balasubrahmanyam, Bhattiprolu Srinivasa Rao, Veeraprasad, Vijay Kurra Rambabu, and Telangana Sobhan Babu fans, among others. They appealed to audiences and fans to attend the Golden Jubilee celebrations in large numbers and make the event a grand success.

A STORY OF FATHERS, A SONG OF SOULS: VRUSSHABHA BEGINS ITS MUSICAL JOURNEY WITH ‘APPA’

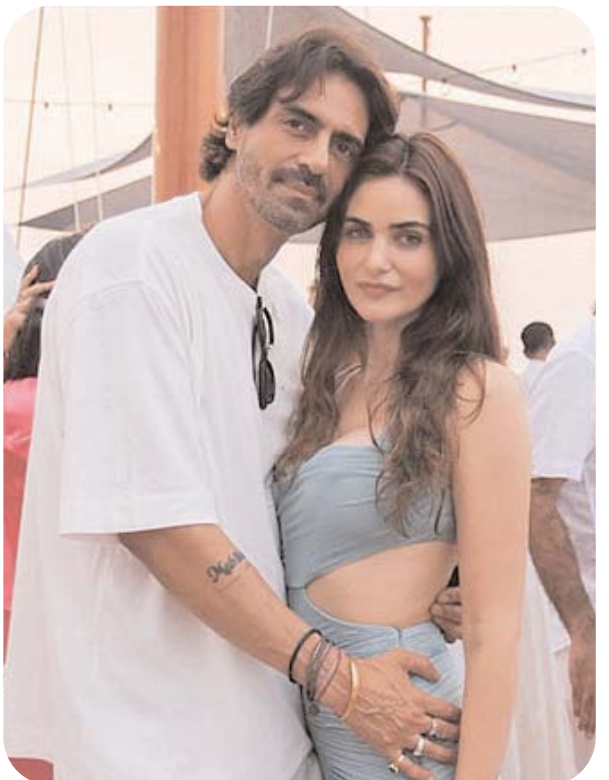
The makers of Mohanlal's Vrusshabha have unveiled the film's first song, "Appa", officially setting the tone for the film's promotional campaign with a deeply emotional and powerful beginning. Presented as the soul of the film, Appa captures the pure and timeless bond between a father and son — a relationship that forms the emotional backbone of Vrusshabha. Composed by Sam CS, the song features soulful vocals by Vijai Prakash in Hindi, Kannada, and Telugu, and Madhu Balakrishnan in Malayalam. The lyrics are penned by Vinayak Shashikumar (Malayalam), Kalyan Chakravarthy Triipuraneni (Telugu), Kartik Kush (Hindi), and Nagarjun Sharma (Kannada), each bringing a unique cultural resonance to their versions while staying true to the shared emotional essence. The music of Vrusshabha is on T-Series. With "Appa" taking the lead, the film's journey towards its worldwide release on December 25, 2025, begins on a heartfelt note. Directed by Nanda Kishore and fronted by Mohanlal, Vrusshabha promises to stand out as one of the biggest cinematic events of



the year. Across all platforms, the song is presented with the caption: Presenting Vrusshabha's first video song 'Appa, a soulful father-son track, the soul of the film. Director Nanda Kishore shared: "We wanted to begin the musical journey of Vrusshabha with 'Appa' because the entire film is rooted in the powerful, emotional relationship between a father and son. This song perfectly reflects the heartbeat of the story and gives the audience a true sense of what the film stands for. Sam CS has created something wonderful, and I'm grateful for the depth he brought to this track. This is just the beginning, as more music and moments unfold, people will understand the soul of this film even more. Stories

about fathers are often left untold, and this one deserved to be heard and felt." Music Director Sam CS shared, "When Nanda narrated the father-son emotion in *Vrushabha*, it immediately connected with me. 'Appa' didn't feel like composing a song; it felt like touching something personal and familiar. And when you have Mohanlal sir at the heart of that emotion, the responsibility becomes even bigger. His presence brings a certain depth, a weight that you can feel even while creating the music. We kept the track very honest because that's what the story needed, and that's what Mohanlal sir's performance inspires. Nanda's clarity made it easy for me to find the right tone, and I just followed that emotion."

Arjun Rampal confirms engagement after six years together



Hyderabad: Bollywood actor Arjun Rampal has quietly confirmed his engagement to longtime partner Gabriella Demetriades. The actor revealed the news during a candid conversation on Rhea Chakraborty's podcast, keeping the announcement simple and personal, just like his style.

and hoped he had not done the same. Rampal laughed and admitted, "I went after her because she was hot, then I realised there is more to it than just that."

- **Their Life Together**

Arjun Rampal and Gabriella Demetriades have been together since 2018. They are parents to two sons, Arik, born in 2019, and Arav, born in 2023. Gabriella is a South African model and fashion designer who often speaks about balancing creativity with motherhood. The couple is frequently seen spending time together as a close-knit family.

- **Past and Present**

Before Gabriella, Rampal was married to former supermodel Mehr Jesia. They married in 1998, separated in 2018, and finalised their divorce in 2019. They continue to co-parent their two daughters, Mahikaa and Myra, amicably.

- **On the Work Front**

Rampal is currently enjoying the success of his film *Dhurandhar*, which has had a strong box office run and features an ensemble cast including Ranveer Singh, Sanjay Dutt, Akshaye Khanna, and R. Madhavan.

